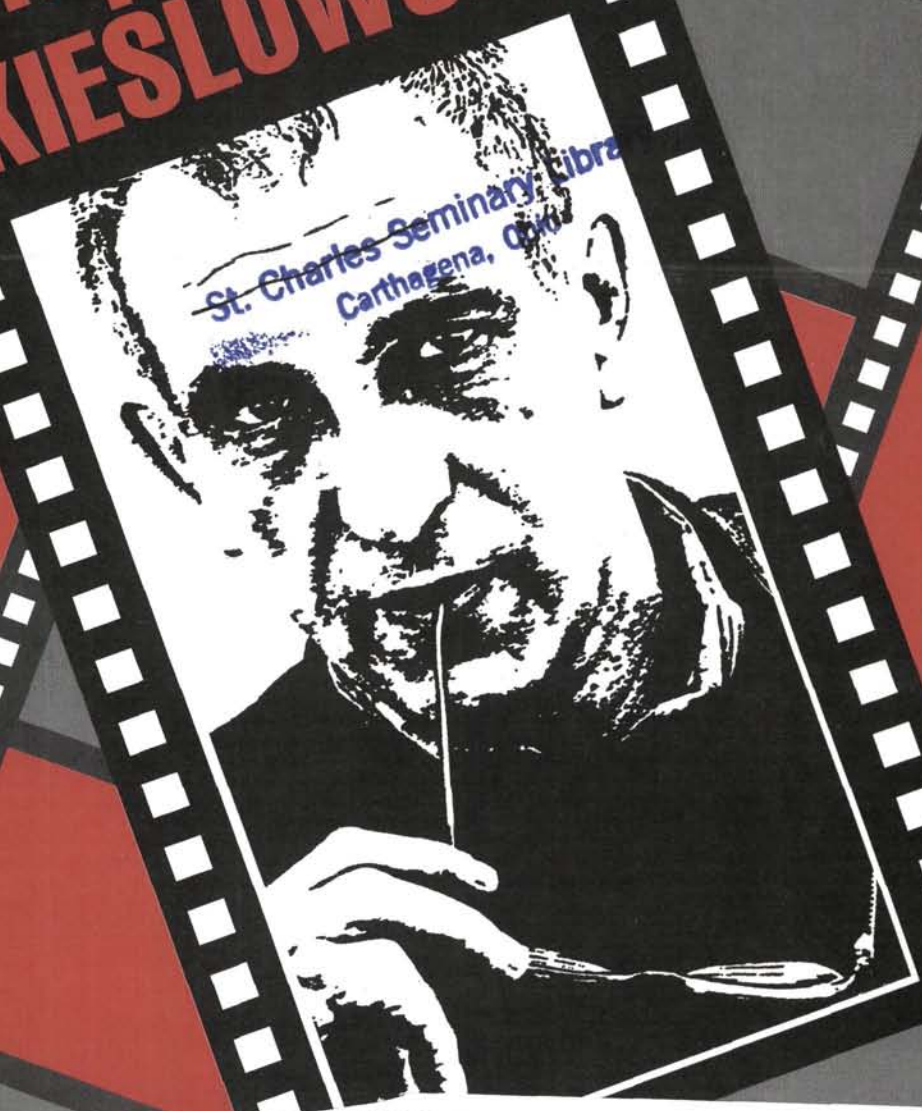
$2.25 August 15, 1997

COMMONWEAL

Joseph Cunneen on KRZYSZTOF KIEŚLOWSKI



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To the Editors

Not a 'feel-good' faith

Peter Steinfels's article about Murray Kempton [June 6] hurts me deeply.

I am concerned that a respected journalist would attempt to characterize something as deep and personal and precious as my spirituality on the basis of a press conference held some fifteen years ago, the details of which he admits to having difficulty recalling.

My faith happens to be about as far away from "feel-goodism" as is possible, and has been formed through much pain and suffering in my life, as well as an ongoing conviction of being sinful by reason of my humanity.

At the same time, it is through pain and suffering that I have felt most intensely God's presence, love, grace, and forgiveness, and have thus, like multitudes of other Christians, gained a new sense of self-worth (or self-esteem) as a child of God.

GEORGE GALLUP, JR.
Princeton, N.J.

The writer is chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute.

The writer replies:

My article did not attempt to characterize Mr. Gallup's spirituality but Murray Kempton's spirit. To do that, I recalled one incident involving the Rev. Robert Schuller and Mr. Gallup, and I stand by my recollection. But if some readers are susceptible to reaching any conclusions about the nature of Mr. Gallup's faith from this one occasion, then his letter is a welcome corrective. For many years, his work has been a major force in combating ignorance and prejudice about religion in the United States, and it has long been clear that this work springs from something far deeper than "feel-goodism."

More could be said about Mr. Schuller as well. I once asked him how he had shifted from the Calvinism of his upbringing to the gospel of positive thinking, and I frankly expected to hear only about self-esteem. Instead I was treated to a remarkable lunchtime conversation about the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. Mr. Schuller's faith, too, has deeper roots in both theology and suffering than his presentations often suggest.

Those are points I would make if I were writing an entire article about Mr. Schuller or Mr. Gallup. In this case, I wasn't.

PETER STEINFELS

Dangerous reading

I read Charles Morris's "A Tale of Two Dioceses" [June 6] with great interest and enjoyment up to the description of the Saginaw church's "carpeted floor" and its bent toward a "modern and attractive...Andrew Lloyd Webber/ Stephen Sondheim sound." At this point I suffered my usual paroxysmal seizure.

Accustomed to such attacks, my wife repaired me to a state of respectable equilibrium by administering slow sips of $40 Scotch, muttering all the while that, though I'm old enough to know better, *Commonweal* really should start issuing warning labels for sensitive readers.

Perhaps in future analyses of the great Catholic divide, *Commonweal* might adopt a new editorial motto: It's the aesthetics, stupid.

RANDOLPH NICHOLS
Lincoln, Mass.

Keep it Catholic

Charles Morris is a talented reporter and writer. But despite his concern, the prospect that the church will dwindle into a small sect of "true believers" may not be so bad. The church would be much more focused—truly one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—if it were not cluttered up with millions of cultural Catholics who are Protestants at heart. What all these liberal reformers want they can have right now by strolling out of the Church of Rome and into any one of the 17,000 or so Protestant sects that already practice what the reformers preach.

Pick your favorite reform: local autonomy over the pastor, women prelates, casual grape-juice-and-bread ceremonies, abortion without guilt, married priests (many of whom find conjugal bliss is not enough after all and stray into the arms of others, whether women, men, or boys), etc. There now exist "Christ-centered" churches that fit any reformer's wish list. And the former Catholic reformers can try to reform the questionable use of money and *amour* by some Protestant thought leaders.

It can be argued that what the Protestants hate—the medieval Catholic church—they have become. They are proof that, the more you try to reform, the less you hold it all together.

DAN CUNNINGHAM
Aurora, Colo.

What common ground?

I enjoyed Charles Morris's fair treatment of the Lincoln and Saginaw dioceses, but I still came away with a sense of unease. However irenic those of us who would be more comfortable in Saginaw rather than in Lincoln might try to be about the latter, it is doubtful that there would be any reciprocity. After all, it was Lincoln's Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz who decreed excommunication for Catholics in his diocese belonging to the Call to Action movement, which has not urged change in fundamental church teachings but in reformable ecclesiastical laws.

The Common Ground Initiative or any other project aimed at reconciliation within the church faces a major obstacle in the intolerance of the Catholic Right. I don't see the Bishop Unteners excommunicating anyone, or Call to Action demanding anything but tolerance for all points of view,

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COMMONWEAL

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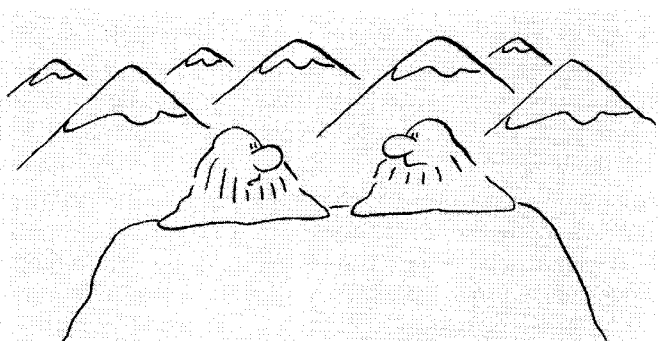

"I just don't understand those Americans. They get born again without dying first."

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and open debate; that's why I became a member after the Bruskewitz *fatwah*. This is for sure a cultural, not a strictly eccclesiastical, problem. The Right insists on being 100-percent certain/right, while the liberal Left at least admits uncertainty.

While the Lincoln model has a nostalgic appeal to those who have no bad memories of the 1950s American Catholic church, and the Saginaw one is a brave effort to model a post-Vatican II church, I fail to see how we can have complete honesty and integrity in the church until papal monarchy is somehow constitutionalized, collegiality becomes the preferred organizational model, and the celibacy law and exclusion of women from the priesthood change. Lincoln is not "conservative," unless the term is used for a relatively recent (nineteenth-century) tradition; the more historically correct word is "ultramontane"—the papal monarchy pyramid, with strict observance of all Vatican decrees, "creeping infallibility," and the "ahistorical orthodoxy" Michael Novak lamented before becoming neoconservative.

As a married, hence on-the-substitutes-bench, priest, with a lifelong interest in church history and a sufficient acquaintance with past and present ecclesiastical politics, I know plenty about both ultramontane and confused postconciliar Catholicism. In my experience, most American Catholics will have to muddle through the confusion and try to tolerate the ultramontane, as long as other options are available in nearby parishes or dioceses. MICHAEL O'NEILL

De Land, Fla.

Let's go to the tape

After reading "A Tale of Two Dioceses" not once but twice, I went to the 1996 edition of the *Official Catholic Directory*, and found some interesting statistics.

Of the 106 priests active in the Saginaw diocese in 1996, 86 were priests of that diocese; 15 were members of religious orders; 5 were "externs" (priests from other dioceses). Of the 118 priests active in the Lincoln diocese, 105 were priests of the diocese; 13 (12 religious and 1 extern) were from outside the diocese. In the same year, Saginaw had 2 ordinations and 4 seminarians; Lincoln had 3 ordinations and 39 seminarians.

Thus, it appears that in that year Saginaw was drawing almost twice as many priests from outside the diocese as was Lincoln, and that Lincoln had almost ten times more candidates for the priesthood than Saginaw.

These data do not tell the whole story, but they add a deeper dimension to Charles Morris's interesting article. JOHN MCMENAMIN, O.S.F.S.

Oklahoma City, Okla.

The first shall be last

Though I have never been in Lincoln, Nebraska, and have never met Monsignor Leonard Kalin, I have no doubt that he is doing wonderful things to advance the kingdom of God in Lincoln. But I do have an answer to his question concerning why one would sacrifice to become a priest if the priesthood is not an "elevated" position. How about this: to carry on the spirit and work of the one who thought so little of being elevated that he stooped down to wash feet, including the feet of those who would exercise authority in his name. After this shocking action he asked: "Do you understand what I have done?"

Apparently Lincoln, Nebraska, and the good Monsignor, need to ask themselves if indeed they do. If serving in the footsteps of the Suffering Servant isn't enough reason to become a priest, then no amount of elevation will do.

I've never been in Saginaw, either, but I'm sure their lack of concern for elevation has something to do with their high Mass attendance.

EDWARD F. DOHERTY

Flushing, N.Y.

The author replies:

I appreciate the thoughtful letters, and offer only a few comments. While Mr. O'Neill is right that liberals do not typically try to excommunicate conservatives, I did find disconcerting, when researching my book *American Catholic*, the degree of distaste, and even contempt, that both liberal and conservative partisans often expressed toward each other. It seems to me a real problem that the church has to deal with somehow, although preferably without banishing the side that loses the argument. The book also includes some of the data Father McMenamin cites: The Lincoln model is clearly more successful in attracting priests, while dioceses like Saginaw face real staffing issues. Finally, I'll bet Mr. Nichols fakes all those paroxysms just so his wife will administer slow sips of $40 Scotch. CHARLES R. MORRIS

A first-time shocker

I was truly shocked by *Commonweal*, for the first time in fifty-some years of reading the magazine, by Paul Baumann's effort to draw a line betwen "Christian anti-Semitism" (or "religious anti-Semitism") and "racial anti-Semitism" ["Re: James Carroll," May 23].

No such distinction can be made. The precondition of the Holocaust was the anti-Semitism of Christians. Even the use of the term "precondition" draws a line that cannot be drawn. Social and legal discrimination are not venial sins while only extermination is a mortal sin. The Holocaust is almost as unimaginable as the anti-Semitism of Christians is horrifying. They are both base perversions of justice, as well as of the commandment to love.

The only thing I can think of that might be described as a kind of "Christian" anti-Semitism is the view of some Christians that the birth of Jesus ended the covenant God made with the people of Israel, and that de-

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Religious persecution

Murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment of Christians have been in the news. In places like Sudan (*see*, *Commonweal*, "For Sale: People," January 17, 1997) and China (Richard Madsen, "China's Catholics: Devout and Divided," April 25, 1997), governments are the perpetrators. Elsewhere, Christians are the special targets of Islamic mobs or rebel forces attempting to overthrow their governments, for example, in Algeria and Egypt. And Christians—Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats—have persecuted each other.

On July 22 the State Department issued a report, "United States Policies in Support of Religious Freedom: Focus on Christians." The report, covering the state of religious freedom in seventy-eight countries, did not just happen. Organizations like Freedom House and the National Association of Evangelicals, individuals like Michael Horowitz, a former Reagan administration official now at the Hudson Institute, and Congressmen Frank Wolf (R-Va.) have prodded and politicked to get the issue of persecution of Christians on the public agenda. The Clinton administration and the Republican Congress have finally responded. In November 1996, then Secretary of State Warren Christopher named an Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. This past June, there were congressional threats to revoke China's trade status, in part, because of its persecution of Protestants and Catholics. And now, there is the State Department report.

All of this is to the good. The international human-rights movement has traditionally focused on political prisoners, not persecuted believers. Because Christianity has been the dominant faith of the West, more likely to be in league with power than its victim, the persecution of Christians around the world often goes unnoticed; when pointed out, it is not often forthrightly acknowledged; when acknowledged, it is rarely protested.

Will this new attention to a very real problem be lasting? The current campaign, still in a formative phase, has to become a long-running effort, which may not be easy. The State Department report has the virtue of conveying the complexity of "religious freedom" in the real world. American responses—both government policy and the mobilization of public opinion—must be equally complex. That suggests some caveats:

First, the merits of focusing on one group, or claiming, as some advocates do, that Christians are the most persecuted group in the world is debatable. Religious communities should assist and support persecuted members abroad. But when the government of a pluralist society is called to act, the picture gets more complex. And what is the point of making claims that threaten to minimize the tragedies of others? Tibetan Buddhism, long persecuted by the Chinese government, lies on the brink of extinction. So do the religious practices of indigenous people around the world. A narrow focus on Christians obscures the links that must tie religious freedom to the protection of human rights overall. The National Association of Evangelicals, in its "Statement of Conscience" on the topic, wisely matched its legitimate con-

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In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 12.

cern for Christian persecution with protection for "all those suffering from religious persecution," and noted how anti-Christian policies often serve to intimidate dissenters of all sorts.

Second caveat: Having achieved a degree of public notice and political momentum for the cause of persecuted Christians, advocates should think carefully about future strategy. Some of the conservatives leading the current effort seem unable to resist the impulse to make the issue a political football in America's culture wars. They seem as interested in settling scores with the National Council of Churches and the United States Catholic Conference as in exerting effective pressure on persecuting governments. Some advocates, relatively recent converts to the issue, appear ready to treat approaches other than their own as signs of moral pusillanimity. Vatican initiatives on behalf of the church in Cuba and China have been dismissed as too soft. The suffering of religious believers overseas has been rhetorically assimilated to the grievances of conservative Christians against liberal elites in the United States. But competing in the contest of victim politics can hardly serve the long-run needs of real victims be they Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, or Baha'i. Building broad religious and political coalitions might actually end their persecution.

Final caveat: The State Department report describes conditions in some countries that are not persecution but discrimination—an important distinction. When Americans speak of religious freedom, we operate with the assumptions of the First Amendment: in principle and in practice our government favors no particular religion and is broadly tolerant of all.

Not so in many other nations. England supports one established church. Islam is the official religion of Saudi Arabia, and all of its citizens must be Muslim. Austria recognizes only thirteen religious organizations, which must meet specified religious criteria. The Orthodox church holds a privileged position in Russia; other Christian groups are restricted. And more or less, the same situation of virtual establishment prevails in Roman Catholic Poland. Some Islamic countries tolerate indigenous Christian groups but prohibit their growth. Where they are the majority population, Buddhists and Hindus limit the activity of other traditions. This is not the American tradition of religious freedom, but we should not act as if all restraints and limits on religious groups are the same as murder, imprisonment, and torture. Ending these should be the first priority.

ONE SMALL STEP ▪ "Welcome to the modern world": So reads the first letter to the editors sent via *Commonweal*'s new web site, http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. We will not quibble with congratulations, but do ask readers to go online and take a look at the "*Commonweal* Reader" (under the button "Inside *Commonweal*"), an anthology of articles from the magazine since 1924. There it is plain to see: *Commonweal* has been talking to the concerns and interests of the present day since its very first issue....

The web site's goal is to keep that conversation going by getting to and engaging people who might never have seen a copy of the magazine or have forgotten about it. *Commonweal*'s distribution is limited, and we want that to change. The web site is not the whole answer, but it's a step toward giving interested people—searching the net, after all, for *something*—a sense of what *Commonweal* is about, then and now.

Besides the anthology, we've posted a recent issue (currently, the May 23 issue with James Carroll on the cover) and indices by both issue and subject matter. Under "About *Commonweal*," there are profiles of the magazine and editors past and present. To ensure that this site will serve as a link to the future, there is also a form for new subscribers. And finally it is possible to e-mail the editors. Tell us what you think. David Gonzalez of the *New York Times* did. He e-mailed: "Who says the age of miracles is over?" O ye of little faith!

TRANSPLANT SUCCESSFUL ▪ Thanks to the strenuous, but ever gracious, exertions of the burly (very burly) men of Approved Moving, the economical genius of architect Joe Druffel (and the efficiency of C&P Construction and their unionized laborers), the ceaseless toil of Managing Editor Patrick Jordan, the inspired kvetching of Editor Peggy Steinfels, and the plucky resilience of everyone else concerned, *Commonweal* has landed on its knees, if not its feet, in our new digs at 475 Riverside Drive. Whew. The computers are plugged in, the phones are ringing, the mail seems to be arriving, and the editorial staff appears to be girding its loins for a resumption of combat. Despite two weeks when we had no real place to hang our miters, it looks as though we will even make the deadline for the issue you are holding in your hands. Who says the age of miracles is over?

The physical elegance, quiet, and technical competence of the Interchurch Center (the official name of our new home) will take some getting used to after Dutch Street's dilapidated charms. One editor is reported to have spent an entire morning just riding the Center's peerless elevators. The building's cafeteria has the ambience of a well-stocked library, the hallways are wide, and the floors as polished as a *Commonweal* fundraising letter. There are even couches in the ladies' rest rooms!

Will such physical comfort spoil *Commonweal*? Stay tuned.

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE GRANDMA HYPOTHESIS

Wallpaper she ain't

Grandmothers matter. So concludes my all-time favorite report of research in *Science* magazine (April 25, 1997). Admittedly, now that I've become a grandmother with a son and baby granddaughter living at home, I zoom in on all references to grandparents. But surely anyone would find *Science*'s account of anthropological findings fascinating.

Studying a remote tribe of hunter-gatherers in Tanzania, a team of anthropologists observed that, as expected, women's foraging for food was crucial to the well-being of their offspring. But the surprise came when the anthropologists found evidence for the crucial importance of the hard work of the grandmothers in the tribes . These "incredibly fit" older women in their sixties put in long days of skilled labor digging tubers and collecting fruit for their grandchildren. Their foraging efforts determined the weight gain of their weaned grandchildren and allowed their daughters to produce and nurse new babies.

These findings about a heretofore invisible group of older women stimulated the anthropologists to form a "grandmother hypothesis." At last, an answer became clear to the evolutionary puzzle of why postreproductive human females, alone of all the primates, live so long after menopause: Women live to a ripe old age to make sure their grandchildren eat. Without children of their own to feed, they have time to provision grandchildren. By feeding the third generation, grandmothers ensure their grandchildren's survival and improve the chances that their own genes are passed on. Once again "altruism" and the bonds of kinship appear to provide human beings with a selective advantage.

But these newly noticed forms of cooperative female labor lead some anthropologists to question the accepted view that the human family evolved because males were needed to provision mothers. It may be grandmother power rather than male hunting prowess that allows for long, dependent human childhoods, so necessary for learning and socialization.

No mention was made in this story of any grandfathers or of grandfather labor. Were all the old men of the tribe dead already? And, one wonders, did grandmothers forage only for their daughters' children and not for their sons' offspring as well? We'll have to stay tuned to see how this new round of anthropological debate on the family turns out. My own hunch is that the importance of men's role as grandfathers will eventually be discovered. Certainly recent research findings on the important psychosocial role of fathers in their children's lives appeared long after the exclusive attention given to mothers and mothering.

Of course, in today's America, despite our mobility, we are a long way from a hunter-gathering way of life; in the urban jungle we are no longer dependent on wild resources. Yet grandparents still play a crucial role in the lives of many children. Nearly 4 million children in the United States live in a household headed by a grandparent. These figures come from the American Association of Retired Persons who, in the face of growing demands, set up an A.A.R.P. Grandparent Information Center (202-434-2296).

Today, more and more grandparents, and especially many grandmothers, are stepping in to rescue their grandchildren whose parents have been struck down by drugs, alcohol, traumatic divorces, mental illness, or death from AIDS. Unsung but heroic sacrifices can be observed in every class and ethnic group. In June, Dr. Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, died from burns suffered in a fire in her apartment allegedly set by her disturbed grandson, the son of a long-troubled adult daughter. At a recent conference, I met a distinguished art historian, long divorced, who alone has taken on the arduous rearing of her drug-impaired granddaughter, the child of her addicted daughter.

In the face of new family stresses, new community-support groups have emerged to help grandparents return to a stage of parenting they never expected to see again. Perhaps we are replaying those earlier historical conditions when infectious diseases, childbearing deaths, accidents, and war routinely took a huge toll on young adults. Orphans, young widows, and widowers have existed in the past, but, when there were so many immigrant families and life expectancy was shorter, there were fewer surviving or solvent grandparents who could take up the slack.

In our family's case, a sudden death in childbirth precipitated our need to help our son raise his baby daughter in a three-generation family household. We have been spared those bitter struggles in which parents have had to cope with their adult children's impairments, sometimes even engaging in bitter custody battles. Tragic fate seems easier to cope with than the effects of wrong choices, mental ills, and failed lives. The role of being back-up, auxiliary resident caretakers is far easier than the one assumed by grandparents who bear the whole burden of responsibility for their grandchildren's upbringing.

And, as always, having money, a nanny, and lots of extended family members can make things easier. How thankful I am to have been one of the last generation of Catholic women who married young, wanted a large family, and, without a shred of guilt, enjoyed producing five boys and a girl in ten crowded years. Now, as my husband and I worship our own little Shirley Temple princess come to stay, there exists a large cast of adoring George Murphys

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to take part in the family tapdance routines. Babies are like a sparkling fire in the family hearth, drawing everyone close together and warming them through and through. Yes, a ratio of ten adults to two babies is about right in this age of superparenting. This will be the count this summer when our six children, two spouses, and two beloved grandchildren rent a house in Ireland for a brief vacation (!?).

Happily, another news report from the family front confirms a long-held belief of mine. Watching my son and son-in-law take care of their babies demonstrates beyond a doubt that men *can* nurture children—and their grandchildren—as well as women can. Tenderness, patience, love, and attentive care are masculine as well as feminine qualities. When Jesus used female imagery for God or for himself, likening himself to a mother hen for instance, he embodied the fact that loving care transcends any limits set by gender. When Saint Paul uses childbearing analogies to describe his ministry, he heads a long line of disciples following Christ's example. I respond with enthusiasm to those feminist theologians who speak of Jesus on the cross as giving birth to our new creation.

We Christians of the West need more practice in thinking of God as our Mother. Or perhaps with new eyes I can affirm that God is not just father, mother, lover, and friend, but grandmother as well. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

WOMEN & MONEY & POLITICS

Can Susan & Emily work together?

On June 26, the statue depicting pioneer suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott was exhumed from the bowels of the United States Capitol and installed in the Rotunda among statues of prominent Americans from every state. It is a rather ugly statue depicting busts of the three women looking very firm-jawed indeed, rising from a massive base. But ugly or not, it was commissioned years ago to commemorate women's long struggle for suffrage, and many of today's leading feminists joined the drive to rescue it from near-oblivion.

There was a ceremony, of course, and press conferences. And, true to the spirit of the women enshrined, some lively controversy. The National Political Congress of Black Women objected to the statue because it did not include a bust of black suffragist Sojourner Truth. Liberal feminists disputed the right of prolife Republican women to claim Susan B. Anthony for their own.

Fiercely conservative Congresswoman Helen B. Chenoweth of Idaho, speaking to the press at the conference held by the Susan B. Anthony List (a so-called nonpartisan PAC dedicated to electing prolife women to high office), had praised Anthony for writing about abortion as an evil. Television correspondent Lynn Sherr (of "20/20") was quoted in the *Washington Post* (June 26) as countering that claim, saying that she had read everything written by Susan B. Anthony and that "she's never said anything on the subject of abortion at all." But Sherr's statement is called into question by quotations from Anthony's *The Revolution* (July 8, 1869), found in the Anthony List literature:

> We want prevention, not merely punishment. We must reach the root of the evil...It is practiced by those whose inmost souls revolt from the dreadful deed....
>
> Guilty? Yes. No matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed. It will burden her conscience in life, it will burden her soul in death; but oh, thrice guilty is he who...drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime!

It is hard to see the above words as referring to anything but abortion. The Susan B. Anthony List was founded in 1993 for the express purpose of helping to "elect prolife women to high public office (that is, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, governor) through early donations and support." It was clearly meant to challenge the liberal and supposedly broader-based Emily's List.

Women were slow to recognize the importance of money in election politics—perhaps because so few had control of any. In the initial struggle, they had relied on speaking, writing, demonstrations, and political acts like hunger strikes and poll challenges to achieve their goals. After winning the vote, they tended to act on the long-held belief that the very presence of women in the process would purify politics. They altruistically formed coalitions around issues, such as protective legislation for women in the labor force and for children. They relied on persuasion and the power of the vote itself.

The second wave of feminism, however, focused on equality. Women demanded entry into the professional schools, into the organizations where networking went on, and into fields (like engineering) previously reserved to men. Inevitably, they sought equality in political office. It soon became apparent—especially after the advent of television—that individual women candidates were hopelessly outmatched in funding. And so Emily's List was born.

Emily's List was founded by activist Ellen Malcolm to give a running start to women seeking office that would make them viable candidates, worthy of financial support from the more traditional sources. (Emily is an acronym for "Early Money Is Like Yeast.") In the years since its inception, Emily's List is reported to be responsible for the election of five senators, thirty-four members of the House of Representatives, and

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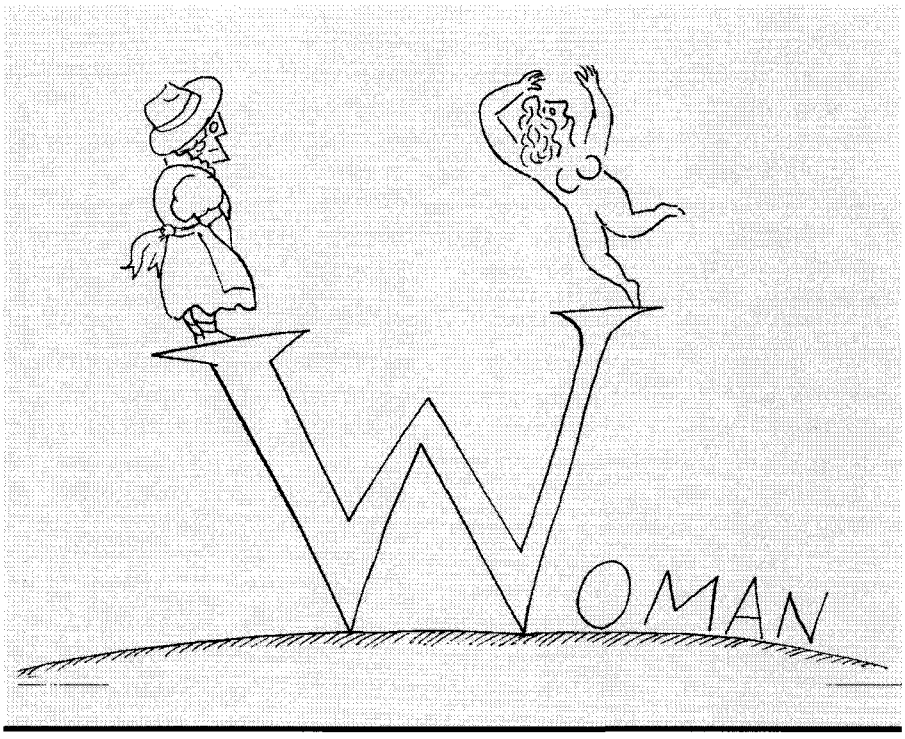
two governors. Ostensibly, Emily's List was intended to support women with a liberal agenda, but it was hung up on the belief that has paralyzed the women's movement generally—that the right to abortion is liberating and must be upheld by any woman seeking office. Hence, outstanding liberal but prolife women like former Congresswomen Lindy Boggs and Mary Rose Oakar could receive no support from Emily's List. (The National Women's Political Caucus, founded earlier to endorse liberals, insisted on the same exclusion.)

In challenging Emily's List, the Susan B. Anthony List has no political criteria other than that candidates be prolife. In the few years since its founding, its supporters claim to have helped in the election of seven women to Congress and in unseating two Emily-backed office holders with their candidates. Despite the claim that the Anthony List is nonpartisan and nonsectarian, all its winners were conservative Republicans.

Still, if the Susan B. Anthony List is true to one of its stated purposes—to initiate a healing process—it may help bring about a significant change in the current stalemate in the feminist movement. The supporters of both the Anthony List and Emily's List believe that there should be more women in political office, that the present ratio of nine males to one female in the Congress, for example, constitutes a gross inequity.



There is basic ground for agreement in that regard.

Anthony backers point to polls that show that a larger percentage of the voting population is closer to the prolife position than to the prochoice one. A 1996 postelection survey, which allowed a six-point gradation of opinion rather than a flat preference for either extreme, showed that 55 percent fell into the prolife position but acknowledged complexity (exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother). There is also a growing acceptance that prevention of abortion is not necessarily to be achieved by legislation and penalties but also by counseling and physical and financial help. If both sides of the controversy can acknowledge the complexity, the prevailing opinion, and the worth of professional prevention, they may find things on which they can work together. If nothing else, hostility may be diminished. □

Jorge Pedraza

VIVE LE STATUS QUO

In France, the more things change...

Apparently hoping to cut off a growing public disaffection with his center-right government, French President Jacques Chirac called early parliamentary elections for June 1. Too late. The surly French electorate ousted Chirac's parliamentary majority and voted into power a Socialist-Communist-Green party coalition with the Socialist Lionel Jospin at its head. Now, hardly two months later, the signs are accumulating that the French are equally dissatisfied with Jospin and his government. A deep pessimism has taken hold of the country.

Things are indeed going badly. Unemployment continues its nearly decade-long swell, up to almost 13 percent. GDP growth continues its equally long slump, with prospects of falling below 2 percent this year. The French economy—50 percent of which is run by the government—appears to be completely stalled, and the latest indicators are grim. To make matters worse, the impending European monetary unification imposes a budget deficit of no more than 3 percent while this year's estimated budget deficit for France is 3.5 percent. Some form of the long-postponed government cutbacks is now inevitable. The fact that the U.S. economy seems to have reached a kind of nirvana of low unemployment, high growth, declining crime rates, almost inexplicably low inflation, and a foreseeable balanced budget doesn't seem to make anybody in France feel better.

Jospin seems to be caught already in the same kind of political turbulence that destroyed his predecessor, Alain Juppé, and crippled Jacques Chirac. Rejecting the massively un-

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popular "politics of austerity" of the right, Jospin rode into power on a wave of classic Socialist promises: the end of privatizations, an increase in the minimum wage, the reduction of the workweek from thirty-nine to thirty-five hours without a reduction in pay, and a reduction of the value-added tax. He even suggested that he felt his government was not bound by the Maastricht Treaty, setting the terms for monetary unification, which was signed by the previous Socialist president, François Mitterand. Once in office, Jospin increased the minimum wage by 4 percent, promised the creation of 700,000 new government jobs, and then let the national assembly go off for the summer. The gamble, clearly, is to jump-start consumer confidence and the economy in order to generate the revenues needed to carry out the Socialist program.

Somebody, at least, has to be optimistic, and it might as well be the government. Only what the French have been given to see is a government that doesn't really believe in what it has been saying and is starting to look a lot like the previous government. Jospin ratified Maastricht, went ahead with the privatization of the national telephone monopoly, France Telecom, and agreed to the shutting down of the Vilvorde factory in Belgium by Renault, in which the French state is a majority shareholder. A number of Jospin's Socialist and Communist colleagues are up in arms.

Most revealing, however, may be the furor over Jospin's proposal to limit the state allocations of $300 per month per child to those families who make less than $50,000 per year (90 percent of French households). A sharp public reaction has government officials anxiously backpedaling. As if in a replay of Juppé's misadventures with French protestors, the government seems stymied by the public. The political logic of what are called "acquired rights"—entitlements—implacably reasserts itself. Anything which is seen as dismantling an entitlement, even if it targets only "rich people," is seen as setting a precedent for rolling back other entitlements and is thus massively unpopular.

One consequence has been the increasing popularity of the extreme right politics of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who expeditiously blames France's problems on immigrants and would start his regime by deporting them all. Le Pen's National Front Party won 15 percent of the vote in the last elections, and it seems likely that, if Jospin's government continues to falter so soon after the French repudiation of the center right, this figure will only increase.

France is stuck in a political-economic malaise that few people see changing any time soon. The most pessimistic suggest that it will all end with violence in the streets before the deadlock breaks; the specter of the "events" of 1968 is conjured up again and again. Optimists, of which there are few these days, suggest that the Socialist government is on a learning curve and that only the Left can bring about the kind of structural changes France needs. Indeed, the Socialist campaign rhetoric gets reworked almost daily. The language coming from some of Jospin's ministers sounds more like the "politics of competition" than the "politics of solidarity." The new minister of education, Claude Allègre, for example, recently dared to call the educational system "a mammoth," off of which it will be necessary to "cut the fat" to "make it more muscular."

The question, however, is whether these little steps will be enough. The French resistance to "the market" is deeply rooted; for them, deregulation is an "Anglo-Saxon" idea. A Colbertian *dirigisme* of the state is the French counterforce, and it manifests itself almost everywhere in French attitudes.

Take, for example the internet-computer revolution that has largely driven the American economic boom. Back in 1981, France Telecom instituted the Minitel, an interactive national computer network that provides a host of services, including a national telephone directory, reservations for trains, planes, and performances, and of course "sex talk." Charging by the minute, Minitel generates tremendous profits that France Telecom shares with the companies that use this service to peddle their wares. The internet, on the other hand, is not "owned" by anybody. Anybody can set up shop on it, and the access costs are a mere fraction of Minitel charges. The internet is inherently structured like an open—read "Anglo-Saxon"—market as opposed to a state-owned—read "French"—monopoly. Neither France Telecom, nor the state train system, nor the state-owned Air France or Air Inter seems to have any interest in promoting the internet, which would undercut a tremendous source of revenues. Almost by instinctive reflex, French ministers are already talking about taxing commerce on the internet. Private citizens, having assumed that their current technology is not only good enough but more importantly "French," have almost completely resisted the internet. Having been in certain ways ahead of the game with Minitel, France now has less internet presence than Finland. There are no legions of French eighteen-year-olds setting up companies and dreaming of becoming the next Bill Gates. French capital markets shun high-tech ventures; international money eschews France altogether. France is hostile territory for free-floating capital and risky start-up ventures. France is hard-wired into a dangerously outmoded Minitel-like political economy.

The Minitel/internet situation and the crippling logic of "acquired rights" reveal a problem that runs to the core of French social and economic life. By preserving state monopolies—economic as well as political—at the cost of developments that will bring about real structural change, France is mortgaging its future. It is preserving a status quo that has little room for the young, leaving them more likely to be unemployed, more likely to feel alienated from the famous "social solidarity" demagogically touted by the Right as well as the Left, more likely to be pessimistic and ill-adapted to life in the twenty-first century. The vicious political circle of "acquired rights" and future-phobic *dirigisme* stifles creativity, innovation, imagination, and optimism—the fundamental capital of the young. □

Jorge Pedraza *teaches French and modern literature at Williams College.*

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KIESLOWSKI ON THE MOUNTAINTOP

Ten Commandments from the late Polish director

Joseph Cunneen

The death of Krzysztof Kieslowski in March 1996 was widely mourned. The Polish director had achieved considerable critical and popular success for *The Double Life of Véronique* and for a trilogy whose titles were keyed to the French tricolor—*Red*, his last movie (1994), being the most successful. But to get a sense of the continuity of his central themes, one has to hunt in special video stores for Kieslowski's earlier work. His most significant achievement, *The Decalogue*, remains largely unknown in the United States. It was produced for Polish TV in 1989 as a series of ten one-hour films on the Ten Commandments. Two ninety-minute films, *A Short Film about Killing* and *A Short Film about Love*, are versions of *Decalogue* 5 and 6 that have played widely in Europe, but the series is an unlikely program for your neighborhood multiplex. It was, however, aired on the BBC several years ago, and there is no good reason why public television here could not do the same.

One of the great achievements in cinema of the last generation, *The Decalogue* combines tough-minded realism and hallucinatory style. Although Kieslowski considered himself an agnostic, he acknowledged that "there are mysteries, secret zones in each individual," that somehow create a climate in which transcendence can be glimpsed even in the midst of an unbelieving society.

Kieslowski was born in Warsaw in 1941. After attending film school in Lodz, he gained a considerable reputation for making documentaries about contemporary Polish social life. Though not directly political, his films encouraged a critical spirit in a country dominated by a Communist regime that owed its place to Soviet power. Kieslowski's awareness of film's capacity to raise questions is evident in an early narrative film, *Camera Buff* (1979), which describes what happens when a Polish worker gets hold of a movie camera. At first intending to chronicle only family events, the worker gets carried away by all that the camera can record. He ends up alienating the authorities with his indiscreet filming, and his monomania destroys his marriage.

Stanley Kubrick, who wrote the introduction to the edition of the screenplays of *The Decalogue*, emphasizes the importance of fate for Kieslowski. In *Blind Chance* (1981), which was banned after martial law was declared in December 1981, Kieslowski presents the different choices a person might make: cooperation with the authorities, work with Solidarity, or concentrate on one's career. The movie, Kieslowski noted, "is a description of the powers that meddle with our fate, that push us this way and that." But he insisted that we accept moral responsibility for our choices.

It would be wrong to think of *The Decalogue* as a personal achievement by Kieslowski alone. A considerable share of credit should go to Krzysztof Piesiewicz. A criminal lawyer in Warsaw who thinks of himself as "Christian rather than Catholic," Piesiewicz met Kieslowski in 1982. The latter was then trying to make a documentary about political trials that took place after General Wojciech Jaruzelski took power. Observing the moral chaos of society, Piesiewicz one day said to Kieslowski, "Someone should make a film about the Ten Commandments." The project gradually took shape, the screenplays a product of their collaboration. "Our idea was very simple," Kieslowski said. "The Decalogue is one of the ethical foundations of today's society. Everyone is more or less familiar with the Ten Commandments, and agrees with them, but no one really observes them."

It was never a question of photographing simple-minded illustrations of the commandments. Rather, by relating the commandments to contemporary situations, Kieslowski hoped to make them real. In fact, the explicit statement of a commandment is never used as a film's title; the viewer sees only an opening number: *Decalogue 1, 2, 3*, etc. The films do not pretend to provide answers, but to present questions. "We didn't want to adopt the tone of those who praise or condemn, handing out a reward here for doing good, and a punishment there for doing evil," Kieslowski wrote. "Rather, we wished to say, 'We know no more than you....

Joseph Cunneen *is co-editor of* Cross Currents *and movie reviewer for the* National Catholic Reporter.

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But maybe it is worth investigating the unknown, if only because the very feeling of not knowing is a painful one.'"

This means that the relationship between the films and the individual commandments is "tentative." The moviegoer is forced to think. For example, instead of illustrating stealing with an action-packed bank robbery, *Decalogue 7* deals with a mother who had previously forced her daughter—to whom she had never shown much affection—to sign over legal custody of her little girl (born out of wedlock), and now lavishes all her love on the granddaughter. In the course of the film the daughter runs away with the little girl. Is she "stealing" her own child (who has nightmares that only the grandmother seems able to soothe)? Or has the grandmother stolen the child's affection and trust? At the very least, the rights and wrongs of the situation are interrelated. *The Decalogue* does not present saints and villains; its characters are imperfect but never totally unsympathetic.

"The films," Kieslowski remarked, "should be influenced by the individual commandments to the same degree that the commandments influence our daily lives"—that is, only partly. This means that you are often unsure of the relationship between a film and a particular commandment; to the director, if the numbers of some episodes were reversed—for example *6* and *9*—it would make no difference. By not giving real titles to the separate films, Kieslowski said he established a sort of game with the viewers. "I merely announce, for example, *Decalogue 1*. The spectator looks at the film and she would like to know what it's about....She begins to think about the commandment. Whether she wants to or not, she is beginning to perform a certain intellectual work. That's what I want her to do because I take the questions seriously." Ironically, Kieslowski added, some of his actors who were Catholic "didn't want to perform in a given film if I didn't tell them what commandment it was dealing with."

Decalogue 2 is a good example of the complexity Kieslowski intended. The story introduces Dorota, a married woman pregnant by a man not her husband, who asks a doctor to tell her whether her desperately ill spouse will live or die. An immediate connection between the action and a specific commandment is hard to perceive, but you are caught up in a serious ethical dilemma. The woman genuinely cares about both her husband and her lover, and believes—even though she herself would like to have the child—that, if her husband is going to live, she must have an abortion. The doctor at first seems coldly unwilling to help, drily reminding her that science doesn't know everything. (We learn later what had left him so emotionally empty: His wife and children had been suddenly killed ten years earlier when a bomb obliterated their home while he was at work.) But Dorota is insistent, even asking the doctor if he believes in God. While suggesting that she herself has no one to call on, she asks the doctor to swear an oath. Finally, he tells her that her husband will die. Dorota has her child, and her fears prove groundless: We see the husband delightedly embracing the baby at the end.

Obviously, Kieslowski is not encouraging us to respond to the Decalogue in a mechanical way; in purely literal terms, the commandment against swearing a false oath may have been broken, but the decision has been made on behalf of life. No abstract principle has been taught; we are simply made intimate observers of two sympathetic people who are struggling painfully for some sense of direction. Because this inner, ethical struggle *is* the action, the emphasis is on close-ups. As Georgia Brown wrote in 1989 in the *Village Voice*: "Faces are crucial....Strikingly, these are real faces, the hair is real hair, the actors wear real clothes. They aren't cosmeticized or photographed to look their 'best'....The overall impression is one of transcendent modesty and a degree of realism, of humanness, we almost never see on screen."

The degree of the spectator's involvement in *The Decalogue* is also affected by the fact that Kieslowski and Piesiewicz linked the episodes in suggestive ways. The principal characters are different in each episode, but some return to play a minor role in another story; to emphasize such relationships, Kieslowski hoped that *The Decalogue* would be presented two episodes at a time. Planned as a series, the films take place in a large Warsaw apartment complex; we see the same few buildings each time. As Kieslowski pointed out, "Someone knocks at the door of an apartment to borrow salt or sugar, people run into each other in the elevator, and in this way become inscribed in the spectator's memory."

The apartment complex is an ideal set for Kieslowski because his camera is fond of windows, mirrors, reflections of any kind:

> Look through any window [of the housing project], there are people behind them. If you look closely, there is something interesting going on at their place. In other words, in the interior of each person you can find something interesting. You simply have to remove the mask, then we can remain together for a while....To have all the stories take place in the same neighborhood also had the advantage of always presenting closed spaces. The way in which those buildings are constructed and laid out limits the field of vision and this offered me many interesting compositions for the camera.

As always, esthetic, social, and moral concerns work together to concentrate and deepen Kieslowski's films.

Another significant link between the different films is the presence, in all but *7* and *10*, of a single, silent observer. He usually appears just before the central character is to encounter a special challenge or to make a crucial choice. This recurring figure is played by the same actor, although he wears different clothing in each episode. His presence, however, is not intended to encourage pretentious symbolic readings or idle talk about angels. Kieslowski remarked that this figure had no influence on the action but that "he leads the characters to reflect on what they are in the process of doing....His intense look at the characters leads them to ask themselves ques-

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tions." Kieslowski told a story that partly explains how he came to employ this device:

> One day, when several of us were discussing a film we had just seen,...an older writer happened to be present. "It's only an average movie," he said. "But I liked the burial scene very much, and the face of the man who was in black, at the left of the frame, was nothing less than sublime." None of the rest of us had seen this man; the director insisted that he didn't exist, no such person was in the shot. "But yes," the old writer insisted, without convincing us.
>
> A week later, the writer died. The incident made an impression on me. What if, in the course of our lives, someone passed by that only those who are at some special crossroad are able to see?

The silent observer is frequently visible in *Decalogue 1*, wearing a sheepskin coat and trying to keep warm in front of a fire. The episode sets the tone for the series by dramatizing the conflict between the rational and the spiritual. "In believing too much in rationality," Kieslowski said, "our contemporaries have lost something." A bright ten-year-old boy, Pavel, lives alone with his father, Krzysztof; the mother is apparently far away, but will phone for Christmas. Father and son have a close relationship—Krzysztof gives the boy problems to solve on a computer—but, when Pavel encounters a dog frozen in the snow and asks about death, all he gets from his father is the definition from an encyclopedia: "the cessation of all functions of the central nervous system." Pavel is divided; he knows that his Aunt Irene believes that there is such a thing as a soul. Later, she picks him up at school, takes him to her house for lunch, and shows him pictures from her trip to Rome, including one of the pope. When Pavel asks her, "What's God?" she simply takes him in her arms. "What do you feel?" she asks, holding him against her breast. "I love you. He is in that." It is a powerful moment.

Kieslowski, however, is not setting up a neat opposition between the aunt's faith and the father's excessive confidence in technology. The director reminds us of the camaraderie between father and son in a sequence that shows Pavel coaching his father to victory in a chess match. It is out of fondness for his son that Krzysztof gives Pavel his Christmas present—ice skates—ahead of time, while insisting that he can't try them out until the ice has hardened sufficiently. Krzysztof calculates the thickness and resistance of the ice on his computer, and even walks out on the ice himself to verify his findings before authorizing Pavel's skating.

But there is an accident, the ice cracks, and we watch with dread as the father searches futilely for his son, and then observes helplessly as a rescue team lifts a small, lifeless body from a black hole. Finally, Krzysztof wanders into a nearby church, and overturns an altar and the candles that are burning before it. The wax leaves a tear on the large image of the Virgin that dominates the scene.

Decalogue 1 shows us the rigor of Kieslowski's approach to filmmaking. Nothing is extraneous; the plaintive music of Zbigniew Preisner—who worked regularly with the director—is used with great restraint; there is no forcing of emotion. No conclusions are offered, either; if computers, like chess, do not provide all the answers, they do teach us that we constantly have to choose the best among several possibilities.

A Short Film about Killing (the ninety-minute version of *Decalogue 5*) is even more demanding in this respect. Unlike the countless movies about violence that dominate our screens, it shows the horror of killing. It takes seven minutes early on in its first half for twenty-year-old Jacek to throttle a cabdriver and another five minutes at the end for the state to execute him. Kieslowski believed that inflict-

Dixie Partridge

Meadow above Forest above Sea Rock

The breeze soundless,
and the tides...breakers abridged
into creases, unwrinkling.
Here, it seems possible
to take one thought at a time,
like footsteps,
silence a storehouse deep as a leaf—
aspen, not yet unraveling
their true colors,
keep a tremor of green.

You think of deer that would come
to the edge of the farm, decades ago:
their eyes wide with an ease
of being alive,
alert toward farm buildings,
the creatures that walked between.
And how they vanished,
smooth as spirits,
before you could notice.

Maybe the length and breadth of memory
is meant to teach us
how to want less
and keep more,
how to take comfort in wilderness
even when it's veined through the self,

how to let go of visible movement
until time and awareness join the understory,
and you recognize in the slanted grasses
the breathing of a place
you have more than once dreamed.

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ing death was the highest form of violence and reported that his film crew was shaking while the execution scene was being rehearsed, even though they knew it was only pretense.

Jacek seems to have only the vaguest motives for the killing of the cabdriver, yet he is relentlessly brutal in the way he ignores the victim's pleas and finishes him off. Although Kieslowski refused to sentimentalize the killer, there is a touch of humanity in Jacek's retention of a photograph of his younger sister, who had been killed in a tractor accident in his native village. The film stresses the chance factors that led to the cabbie's picking up his passenger, and contrasts them with the boy's cool determination as he prepares the rope he will use in the murder. Jacek's attitude is paralleled by the impersonal efficiency with which the executioner prepares for his work. The cinematographic use of filters makes everything seem soiled and opaque. The young defense lawyer knows his efforts are futile but listens sympathetically to his client's last requests. At the end, Jacek's confession is cut short by his jailers because he's taking too long.

The deep humanism behind Kieslowski's minute observation of how people behave, both alone and in company, is equally evident in *A Short Film about Love (Decalogue 6)*. Tomek, a young mail clerk, uses a stolen telephoto lens to spy on Magda, an attractive young woman who entertains her lovers in her apartment, the windows of which face his. The movie does not treat his voyeurism as simply contemptible; there is a shyness that coexists with an obsessive romanticism, which is heightened when one night he observes her weeping. Tomek makes anonymous phone calls and even takes a second job as a milkman so that he can deliver bottles to her door. When Magda finally agrees to see him, however, she destroys his unrealistic adoration by offering herself to him; he is so shattered that he goes back to his apartment and slashes his wrists. What is distinctive is that sex here—unlike its presentation in so many movies—is never a titillating distraction. Kieslowski emphasized that in *6* the camera is always "looking at the world through the eyes of the person who is loving, not the person who is loved." Later, when Tomek is in the hospital, Magda begins to feel some compassion for him, and we see the world from her vantage point: "We're always looking at this love," said Kieslowski, "through the eyes of the person who is suffering because of this love."

The death of the boy Pavel in *1*, and the decision for life in *2*, only reinforce the power of *Decalogue 8*, which for me is the high point of the series. Before the titles, there is a shot of a little girl under a porch holding the hand of an adult; it is the only flashback of the series. The episode brings together two women: Zofia, an aging ethics professor, and Elzbeita, a younger woman, an American Jew, who has translated some of the professor's work. The latter is invited to sit in on Zofia's seminar at the university. During the class, students are asked to bring up ethical cases, and one of them raises the issue dramatized in *Decalogue 2*. When Zofia comments that the important thing is that "the child is alive," Elzbeita is prompted to bring up another case, "which has the advantage of being true." It is the story of a six-year-old Jewish girl in 1943 who was taken to the home of a couple who had volunteered to be her fictional godparents, but at the last moment withdrew their offer. Zofia knows that Elzbeita is really addressing her: Forty years ago Zofia was the young woman who had refused to provide the asylum requested. Zofia invites the younger woman to her apartment and explains her past action as a choice not to endanger a resistance network. She is now convinced, she says, that "there is no cause more important than the life of a child." Her humility and deep sincerity turn what could have been a combative encounter into a warm exchange. Elzbeita recognizes the professor's moral courage; after refusing to receive the little girl, in 1943, Zofia had worked to save a good number of Jews. The American expresses some surprise, though, that "I've never read anything in your work about God."

"I am reluctant to use the word God," Zofia responds. "One can believe without having to use certain words. Man was created in order to choose....If so, perhaps we can leave God out of it."

Kieslowski's *Decalogue* strengthens my conviction that religious art in our time must inevitably be a very indirect kind of testimony, not intended as such by the artist. In strict fidelity to the laws of movie-making, Kieslowski looks unflinchingly at a reality we can neither control nor fully understand; he shows characters and actions that are at first opaque, and only gradually take on significance. Nor does he offer any explicit openings to grace, as are sometimes suggested in the endings of Robert Bresson's films; we only recognize the limitations of our resources. As the desperate father cries out at the end of the screenplay of *Decalogue 1*—a line not spoken in the film—"Who is there to turn to?" □

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IN HUNGARY, COPING WITH FREEDOM

The capitalists are coming

Robert Murray Davis

When I first went to Budapest as a Fulbright lecturer in 1981, the city did not seem wholly foreign, since any modern metropolis has the same general infrastructure, but the architecture, the culture, the life on the streets, the irony and quickness of the professors and intellectuals I met, and of course the fact that it was governed by a Communist regime made it seem very exotic. I enjoyed myself enough to think of Hungary as a second homeland, to value the friends I made, and to return, briefly, as a tourist in 1983 and as a Fulbright lecturer for the exciting days of fall 1989, when the Communist Party abolished itself and the red stars came tumbling down.

When I returned for my fourth visit in October 1996, a modified version of the party was in power, but Hungary seemed less foreign because of an entirely different incursion. Friends who know that I'm not Hungarian but, since they've gotten used to my reappearance, don't regard me as entirely American either, wanted to know what differences I saw. "More McDonalds," I said. "More English. And more toilet paper." Viewed symbolically rather than literally, this represents a truth, if not the whole truth, about what has happened since the events of 1989 that everyone refers to as "the change."

"McDonalds" is shorthand for the capitalist horde that has overrun Hungary. In the stores, American brand names do not dominate, but they have a strong presence. Billboards carry familiar names: Burger King, Samsung, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Daewoo. On the streets, Russian Ladas and East German Trabants have not disappeared, but they are almost lost among the West European, Asian, and even a few American cars. Suzuki has an assembly plant just south of Esztergom, the country's ecclesiastical center.

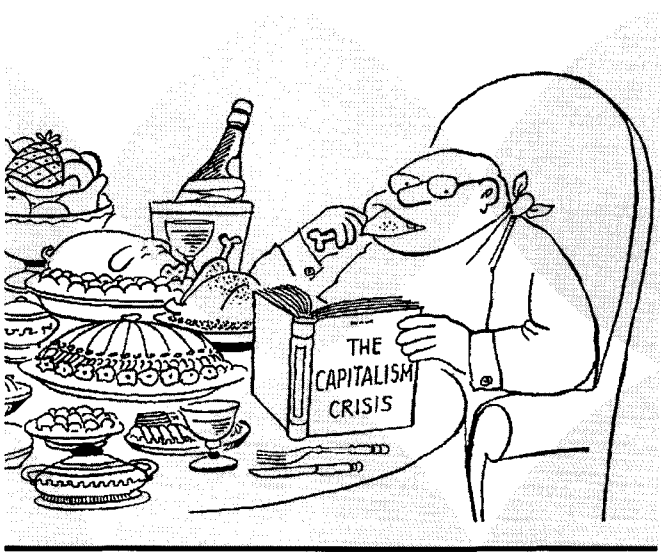
There are other indications that late capitalism has come to Hungary. Luxury goods have moved outside the tourist mecca, Vaci Street, the Hungarian equivalent of Rodeo Drive. Casinos offer an alternative to Lotto, so that rich people—who exist in larger or more obvious numbers—can gamble too. A third television channel has been added, and cable service offers broadcasts in English, German, Italian, and French. People complain about telephone service, but it is much more widely available and efficient than it was in 1981.

Robert Murray Davis *teaches at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of* A Lower-Middle-Class Education *(University of Georgia Press).*

And while some of the old heavy-cholesterol restaurants (Berlin, Sofia) have closed, new ones of all nations and ethnicities have sprung up. In 1989, the sudden availability of bananas was cause for excitement; now street stalls and supermarkets routinely offer foreign produce, so that diet does not depend solely on seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Diet and exercise play a much larger part in Hungarian life than they did under communism. At the beginning of the 1980s, another American remarked that, if you saw someone running, it was probably a Marine from the American Embassy. Now joggers, bicyclists, skaters, runners, and even marathoners are not uncommon, and there is a gym called "Arnold." Smoking is still more common and less stigmatized than in the United States, but Feri Takacs, my first Hungarian friend, quit several years ago and reports that people no longer smoke in academic meetings. He is more conscious of his diet and has taken to walking long distances to work and even paces less active friends in their circuit of a large park.

The park is less pleasant than it used to be, he reports, because it is now a refuge for glue-sniffers. They would not have been tolerated under the post-1956 Communist regime of Janos Kadar, which would also have suppressed evidence of petty street criminals and of what seems to be a whole new class of the destitute and even homeless people. Many of the latter have been displaced by the collapse of Hungarian



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heavy industry, which, like that in most of the former Soviet bloc, has been unable to make the transition to the free market.

Hungarians on fixed incomes or barely flexible incomes are only slightly better off because of inflation, and public-sector workers are underpaid and demoralized. When Hungarian currency was fixed, the exchange rate was 33 forints to the dollar in 1981 and in 1989 only 40 forints. Now free-floating, forints converted during my visit at just over 153 to the dollar. Prices have risen accordingly. At the most basic level, using a public toilet cost one forint in 1981 and into 1989, when the rate increased to five forints. Now it is twenty forints. (The restrooms in McDonalds are free, one reason not to repine at the advance of capitalism.) Tickets on public transportation, once a forint to a forint-and-a-half, are now fifty forints. Other prices have risen comparably, and, while goods and services are not expensive by West European standards, the bargains of the 1980s are gone.

On the whole Hungary is more comfortable for Anglophones than it was fifteen or even seven years ago, partly because of the official desire to increase tourism and partly because the Hungarians realize that English is the language of commerce and of the future, and they use it voluntarily, unlike the Russian that was for years required in the schools. The most startling evidence of the spread of English came at a restaurant in Eger, where I sat next to a group that included the mayor and his deputy and a delegation of businessmen from France—all speaking English.

While English is not yet universal, it is slowly advancing. In museums, broad explanatory signs are repeated in English, at least for the major exhibitions and on the first floor. Most restaurants, even in the provinces, have menus in English that are sometimes not very appetizing, as in "Lard goose with steamed cabbage," and sometimes surreal, as in "Nisp duck." (My Hungarian friends and I decided that this meant "crisp," but we never did figure out the meaning of the popular billboard legend, "Stool your image.") On the railways, first-class carriages have signs in English as well as Russian, German, and French; second-class carriages do not.

Nor do they have toilet paper. This is noteworthy because most other toilets do, a condition that did not prevail in the 1980s. Paper for other uses is now a good deal slicker, and the kind and amount of tourist information is greater in quality and quantity.

As for hard news and information about current events, monoglot Anglophones were almost entirely in the dark in the early 1980s, when the only source of local information was the state-produced *Daily News*, four pages evenly divided between English and German. Now there are at least three independent English-language newspapers in Budapest. All are weeklies, in tabloid format; all began publication in the 1990s; all, though they acknowledge the needs of tourists, are directed primarily to the growing and, by Hungarian standards, affluent expatriate community which includes those in business as well as those in the arts and less easily classifiable occupations. *Budapest Week* and *Budapest Sun* resemble the down-scale *Village Voice* imitations published in many American cities, and, though they devote a good deal of space to art and leisure, they take what my Hungarian friends seem to regard as at least inoffensive and at best serious and responsible positions on Hungarian politics and culture, including stories about the many political parties in—and out—of Parliament.

Budapest Business Journal, published by a company which has similar papers in Warsaw and Prague, is what one might expect: who's up, down, in, or out at various companies; the effect of government policies; financial difficulties and scandals in and out of government. To me the most interesting story was "Culture fund fights to keep state subsidy," partly for its effect on some of my friends and partly for what it reveals about the current climate in Hungary. The National Cultural Fund's largest source of revenue is a culture tax, with a much higher rate for "items featuring sex and violence." (This could account for the collapse of the Hungarian edition of *Playboy*, though the fact that Budapest is the porn capital of Europe is a more likely cause.) The Ministry of Culture and Education has been granting up to $2 million a year, just under 15 percent of the total, but the subsidy ended in March 1997. The effect on cultural institutions could be severe.

This struck me because the Petofi Literary Museum, once fully funded by the culture ministry, was the site of a conference sponsored by Hungarian P.E.N. and the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation on the topic "In the Jungle of Freedom: The Fragility of Our Civilization." Most of the speakers were from countries in the former Soviet Bloc or what used to be Yugoslavia; many had spent their most productive years under political and other constraints on their freedom to express themselves. Their testimony was moving and, to someone who has never had to face conditions anything like this, humbling.

Some writers had an enviably detached view of and energetic approach to their circumstances. But other delegates, especially the ones who had suffered longest and might be expected to rejoice in the new openness, emphasized the conference title's ambivalence about freedom. Yes, the undercurrent ran, Soviet repression was a terrible thing, and thank God it is over. On the other hand, for whatever motives and however grudgingly, the previous regimes *did* support culture and the arts, especially literature, especially the P.E.N. clubs, especially....

Since 1989, American governmental and foundation support of Hungarians has also narrowed to a trickle. For example, the number of Fulbright lecturers and scholars is down about 45 percent from the closing days of the cold war. My friends laughed, though not heartily, when I told them that what they need is another cold war so that America will launch a second cultural crusade.

Hungary certainly needs new money and new business as badly as it needs to move old business out of the black

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and gray markets and the streets and metro stations, where the spirit of free enterprise is alive if not exactly well, into the tax-paying daylight of international commerce. And since the tourist industry is at least a palliative for what Hungarians hope is the temporary loss of heavy industry, one has to guard against the attitude I've seen in Santa Fe, where residents of a few years complain bitterly about the incursion of tourists and other newcomers. But to someone who walked the nearly empty streets of Szentendre, the picturesque art colony north of Budapest that is the Hungarian equivalent of Taos, it is rather jarring to return and have to edge between racks of mass-produced souvenirs and packs of German and Japanese tourists, to hear the grating, familiar accents of other Americans, and to hope in vain that one won't be regarded as being anything like *them*.

Fortunately, even in Szentendre the museums and the streets north of the shopping district are not crowded, and in towns like Esztergom, Eger, Veszprem, and Kecskemet, the inhabitants go reassuringly about their normal business as if no tourists were within a thousand miles.

Better still, my friends go on with their lives as teachers and writers, producing and transmitting work that even in translation is moving and funny and more finely crafted than anything in the tourist stalls or in the boutiques on Vaci Street, pleased if Americans are interested but in no way dependent upon our approval.

My last full day in Budapest was All Souls' Day, a Saturday on which intermittent clouds finally dispersed and the wind died. Feri and I took a leisurely walk in the city where he has lived all his life: through the city park and the open-air flea market and back, after an ample lunch, past Embassy Row and his old neighborhood to what I still think of as Lenin Korut, now Terez Korut, a segment of one of the boulevards in Pest that begins and ends at the Danube. The sidewalks were full of people, moving more leisurely than on a week-day, even stopping to look at the displays in the stores.

Feri is usually even more sardonic than sanguine about political, economic, and all other conditions than most Hungarians, which is very sardonic indeed, but he softened under the influence of the day. His countrymen, he reflected, were not such a shabby people after all, and it was good to see them enjoying themselves.

I was reminded of the remark that Hungarians complain more than anyone else but at the same time seem to enjoy life more. Perhaps this results from the fact that during their 1,100 years in this homeland, they have been overrun so many times—by Tartars, Turks, Austrians, Nazis, Communists—that occupation has become a normal pattern in their history. Now the capitalist invasion has brought a new set of problems to supplement or supplant the ones imposed by the Russians. Hungary has survived its enemies. Now, I hope, it can survive those who claim to be its friends. So far, by various shifts and stratagems, Hungarian style and character seem to be surviving the capitalist invasion by adapting to it and by seasoning it with their own flavor. □

Peter Markus

Dark Waters

I

We return with these marble-eyed
insomniacs who rise from beds
of scagweed to scrounge stagnant
shallows, sudded mudflats stirred
by stickshadows striping the shore
whipping triple-hooked harnesses
into an industrial wind that spits
coke oven ashdrift, pig-iron slag—
the backlash of Great Lakes Steel.

We shine high-beamed flashlights
into coffee-colored waters sullied
by sludge, the riverbottom nowhere
to be seen, blindly felt by lead
sinkers dragged snagged over slabs
of busted concrete, the rusted
husks of car wrecks, every so often
an occasional drowned body gazing
eyeless from its underwater grave.

II

Our father taught us how to bait
a hook, told us to tip our spinners
with the blood of leeches, to spit
into a river to wish for luck.
He was a cross-yourself Catholic
who'd rush to church after a night
spent trolling the Sugar Island cut
in his 14-foot outboard, a bucket
to bail holy water on bended knees.

Tonight his eyes have clouded over
milk-curdled—white like the walleye
he could find blindfolded, drifting
under a sky blacker than creosote,
cutting upriver at the southern tip
of Bob-Lo, Lake Erie's mist thick
as cheesecloth, the red buoy bell
ringing in his right ear reminding
him he was returning home from sea.

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Richard Alleva

MASKED MEN

Woo's 'Face/Off'

Face/Off is a feast for the senses that often turns into an assault on the senses and that always asks us to disbelieve our senses. On one level, this is an action film *in excelsis*, a special effects extravaganza that, just when we think it's gone over the top, slaps us in the face with the fact that we don't know what that top can possibly be. Only the director, John Woo, knows, and on his way to it he will thrill, hammer, harrow us to his heart's content. Watching this movie, I felt I was seeing everything I hate in contemporary commercial filmmaking, yet I sat there enthralled. It was as if I had fallen into the hands of a sadist who had developed the most tender regard for me. "Oh," John Woo seemed to be purring, "I know you hate such things, but you haven't seen *my* explosions, *my* firefights, *my* brand of chopsocky, *my* chase scenes. I will make you love all of it." I had to shake my head while exiting the theater to get rid of the metallic buzz inside my skull that was threatening to turn into a world-class headache. But, yes, I loved what had put the headache there. If there is such a thing as gourmet junk food, *Face/Off* is its cinematic equivalent.

But it's also that rarity: a subversive commercial movie. When you see a conservative, main-line action film like *Rambo* or almost any Jean-Claude Van Damme picture (Woo directed one of them), you are given a set of visual signals you have to obey if the movie is to give you any pleasure at all. That glowering, square-jawed, muscle-bound hunk is the hero. Root for him. And that smirking, foppishly dressed fellow with the British accent and the intellectual demented gleam in his eyes is the villain. Fear and despise him. Obey the signals, turn your mind off, and your basic instincts will get a healthy work-out, these movies promise.

But *Face/Off* subverts such rules and you can't turn off your mind while watching it. Though its stars, Nicolas Cage and John Travolta, don't look alike, there is an emotional and physical affinity between them. Neither is (to say the least) a golden boy. Their asymmetrical, rather untrustworthy faces (Travolta the Weasel, Cage the Simian) can express tenderness, even nobility but are really more suited for conveying unease, deviousness, monomania, lechery, treachery, *Schadenfreude*. Both actors are fit to play either the imperfect hero or the perfectly loathsome villain. And in this movie there is no either/or. Both actors get to play both roles.

The story of *Face/Off* is Fu Manchu stuff. Having immobilized the terrorist Castor Troy (Cage), government agent Sean Archer (Travolta) submits to some sci-fi plastic surgery and assumes the face and voice of his enemy in order to trap Troy's confederates and defuse a hidden bomb. We have spent the first half-hour of *Face/Off* watching Travolta's face express fatherly tenderness and anguish (his son was killed by Troy), courage, loyalty, frustrated longing for his estranged wife, ravaged perseverance. And we have grown used to Cage's face as a mask of murderous exaltation. But after Travolta takes Cage's face, Cage soon escapes and steals Travolta's. *Volteface* with a vengeance! Time to disbelieve our senses. But, since we're not Pavlovian dogs, we soon adjust to the switch and again know whom to root for. Right?

Wrong. Because Woo isn't content to confuse our eyes, he wants to tease our moral values as well. When agent Archer finds himself locked up in the prison meant for Troy, with no one to believe he is really the good guy, he breaks out, killing some guards as he does so. How are we supposed to feel about those slaughtered guards? As necessary victims to ultimate justice? Hmmm. Later, Troy, still wearing the face of the hero, leads a government raid on a terrorist stronghold in order to kill Archer, who's taken refuge with his erstwhile enemies. To get the hero, the villain is willing to kill some of *his* old terrorist comrades. Well, naturally, the scumbag! But wait a minute. To protect himself and a woman and child who are part of the terrorist family (the bereaved Archer has bonded with the little boy), agent Archer participates in the killing of some of his old law-and-order comrades. And how are we supposed to feel about *that*?

There is stylistic subversion as well. As I've indicated, Woo bombards our senses with stunts and special effects. But in other action films, the relatively quiet moments carried by mere acting and dialogue are usually allowed to exist only for the sake of exposition or simply to give the viewer a rest between explosions. Not in this movie. In fact, long after seeing *Face/Off*, you may find yourself remembering not the chases and fights but the sneaky eroticism and bravura nastiness of the nonviolent scenes. For instance, having already slept with Archer's wife, the terrorist then struts into the bedroom of her teen-aged daughter. But not to worry, he only bums a cigarette. "Hey, I never knew you smoked," the girl remarks as her "father" leaves. He replies, "No? Well, Papa's got a whole new bag now." And Travolta undulates out of the room with a bit of the conviction he brought to the dance floor of *Saturday Night Fever* twenty years ago. No incest for now, but it's disturbingly in the offing.

There are also hints that the terrorist, once ensconced in Archer's life, is able to please the people in it much more than Archer ever was. Archer, bent on avenging his son's death, neglected his wife; the terrorist woos her with flowers and candlelight dinners. Archer was a workaholic who drove his fellow agents crazy; Troy the terrorist radiates camaraderie and gratitude. (And why shouldn't he? Everyone's dropping top secrets in his lap.) Archer performed heroic deeds

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and quickly moved on to the next assignment, barking at anyone who tried to congratulate him. But when Troy defuses a bomb (strictly to further his nefarious schemes, of course), he receives praise gracefully and basks in the media limelight. Sure, Archer was an authentic hero, but Troy the terrorist knows how to *play* a hero. These days, which is more important?

Face/Off is a dazzling entertainment, and, with its cleverness, high energy, and good acting, it may convince some that it's also a work of art. Don't be fooled. Compare it to a thriller that was indeed a (minor) work of art, *In the Line of Fire*, and you can see the difference. In *Face/Off*, the exchange of roles between hero and villain is titillating, but the hero, before the exchange, is a stock figure of virtue (despite Travolta's likability) just as the villain is a caricature of evil genius (despite Cage's magnetism). In *Line of Fire*, Clint Eastwood gave us a convincing man even before the plot got under way, and, though John Malkovich made his villain a monster, he was a complex monster with surprising frailties and convincing grievances.

Also, consider the way the slaughter of innocent bystanders is treated in both movies. In *Face/Off*, hundreds of people get mowed down, but they're just so many bowling pins knocked over. But when the bank officer of *In the Line of Fire*—a sweet, lonely, somewhat overweight woman—realized that the man she was attracted to was trying to kill her, her nightmare became one of our nightmares because the script and actress had convinced us of her humanity before she became a victim. Her death was a component in the screenplay's machinery, but it felt tragically real. In *Face/Off*, everything exists for the sake of momentary thrills.

Some critics in film journals will be turning out unreadable articles for years to come about the profundity of *Face/Off* because its pop subversiveness pleases their fake-anarchist sensibilities. Basically, *Face/Off* is schlock. But it's high-octane schlock. Superduper schlock. John Woo is still what Steven Spielberg used to be: a little boy who can hypnotize adults. □

BOOKS

Good & plenty

Mason & Dixon
Thomas Pynchon
Henry Holt & Co., $27.50, 773 pp.

Frank McConnell

I've never been any good at keeping secrets. So: Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* is not only the most stunning novel I've read in the last twenty years, but one of the most stunning novels I've read, comma, period. At this point I think we can safely argue that the radiant center of American fiction is inhabited by only three characters, Melville, Faulkner, and Pynchon, and I'm not too sure about Melville, and I left out the unapproachable Henry James only because he didn't really want to be American. So am I telling you that if you don't read *Mason & Dixon* your life will be, by that measure, impoverished? You bet. But of course most of you won't—or at least you won't finish it. It's long, by which I mean *long*; it's involuted, convoluted, self-referential—it's Thomas *Pynchon*—and it has, as all of Pynchon's novels, virtually no plot. It is, simply, magnificent.

I've been haunted by Pynchon for thirty-four years. In 1963, my Notre Dame classmate Mike McClintock—now a distinguished professor of literature at the University of Montana—loaned me a copy of *V*—Pynchon's first novel—suggesting that I might enjoy it.

Well, "enjoy" was not precisely the word. I was at first amused, then fascinated, and then I fell into the book, and, to tell you the truth, I'm not sure I ever got back. This man, I thought then and am sure now, possessed or was possessed by the right and real voice of his, which also happened to be my, moment—and yours, too, like it or not. The voice is irreverent—Pynchon loves jokes, the dumber the better, erudite, ranging from physics to Kabbalah and back again—and breathtakingly eloquent, nearly ever sentence, as in Faulkner, a tiny masterpiece.

It is also profoundly, maybe despairingly, religious; we'll get to that.

Mason & Dixon is Pynchon's fifth novel, after *V*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *Vineland*. And it continues a pattern in his work first noticed, I think, by my brilliant student Parker Douglas: one large, sprawling novel embracing as much Euro-American history as possible, then one shorter and jokier novel set in California, jokiest state of them all, then another large, sprawling novel *und so weiter*.

Well, *Mason & Dixon*, right on schedule after *Vineland*, is large and sprawling—or better (Pynchon imposes these paradoxes upon you), focused and sprawling.

This much is fact. Between 1763 and 1767, Charles Mason, a British astronomer, and Jeremiah Dixon, a British surveyor, were commissioned by the Crown to determine the exact boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland. A more tediously quotidian task could

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probably not be invented—except that the Mason-Dixon Line became the demarcation of America's very own Gulag Archipelago, the line between our free and our slave states, still the symbol of our national failure to live up to our promise to ourselves.

But Pynchon can't deal with one theme without dealing with all the related themes, and all themes are, finally, related: This was also Faulkner's curse and blessing.

What I mean is, this isn't a novel about slavery—though it is a novel about slavery—and it isn't a novel about America—though it is a novel about America—and it isn't even a novel about the limits of reason, thought it's surely that, too.

At last—and this is why I believe Pynchon is the only living and maybe the *only* American novelist who deserves to be called "great"—it is a novel full of nostalgia for the departure of God.

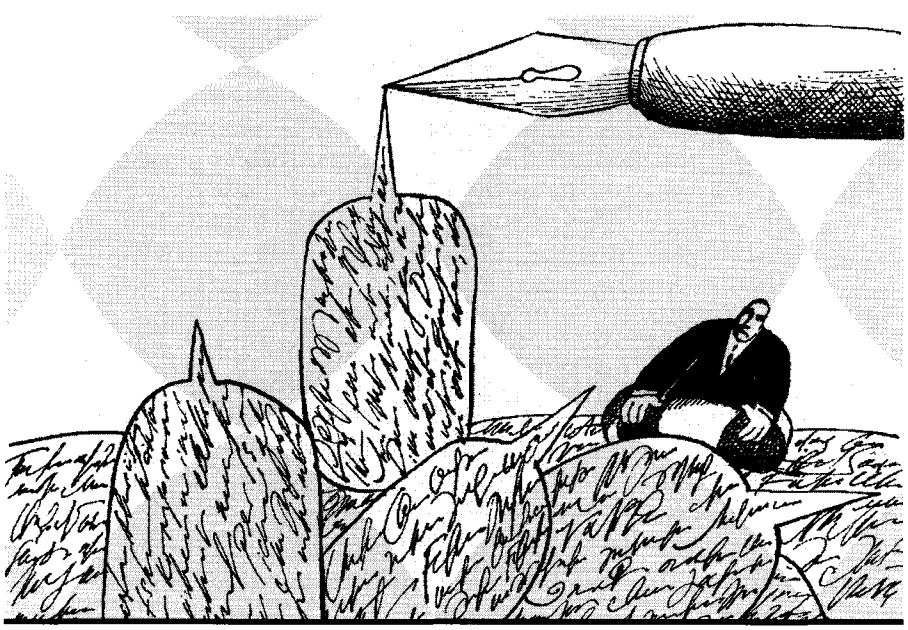
"I was back in America once more, finding, despite all, that I could not stay away from it, this object of hope that Miracles might yet occur, that God might yet return to human affairs, that all the wistful Fictions necessary to the childhood of a species might yet come true,...a third Testament...."

That is said by the Reverend Wicks Cherrycoke (yeah, yeah—Pynchon likes making up dopey names). Cherrycoke is the main storyteller of *Mason & Dixon*, reminiscing years later about accompanying them on their survey, after they're both dead. But other narrators, some identified and some not, weave intricately in and out of his tale, in this, the greatest eighteenth-century novel of the twentieth century.

Everett Zimmerman, in his recent book, *The Boundaries of Fiction* (Cornell University Press), argues persuasively that the novel as a form exists, *ab origine*, in the creative tension between history and myth, the urge to describe the world as it is and the urge to imagine the world as we desire it. We need novels, that is, because they articulate our condition as cosmic amphibians, living in the ineluctable pressure of the real *and* in the hope of a final, human meaning—forever speaking, as Karl Rahner writes, into the endless desert of God's silence.

Now all Pynchon's books are set on this boundary: His Central Plot is that an investigator finds him/herself embroiled in a wide-ranging conspiracy—a plot which has no name—which may be directed either toward the final dehumanization of the human race or toward a moment of dark/radiant transcendence.

But never before have the terms been stated as uncompromisingly as here. Bear of little brain that I am, I was halfway through the book before I got the sublime point of Pynchon's choice of subject. Mason and Dixon—a melancholy, vaguely spiritualist astronomer and a

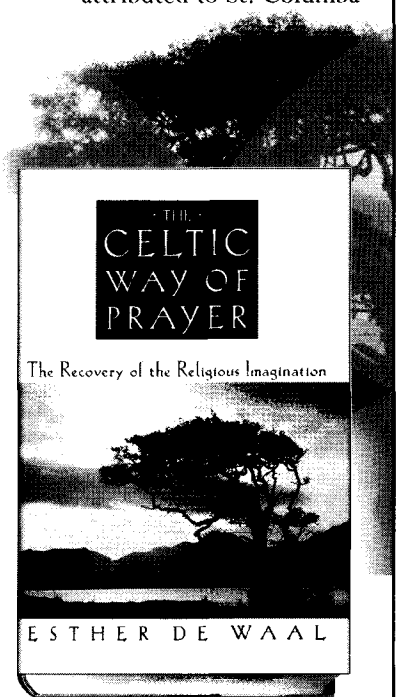


How the Irish sing salvation...

"May every path before me
be smooth, man, woman
and child welcome me.

A truly good journey!
Well does the fair Lord
show us a course, a path."

—attributed to St. Columba



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jovially carnal surveyor; a disciple of the stars and a disciple of the earth—what are they doing? They are using the stars and the earth to draw an imaginary line that will determine the course of American history, and therefore—at least for Pynchon—the fate of hope, in our world, altogether.

Their journey into America, which occupies the great bulk of the novel, is a journey into hallucination—nothing new for our lad Tom—but hallucination whose point is simply that all our national agonies *and* glories lie implicit in the conditions of our founding, a Republic of Reason administered by Born-Again Christians. If this is a great eighteenth-century novel, it's an even greater twentieth-century one, a perfect distillation the of the ironies of faith and despair that define the America of the soul.

I don't have space to tell you about Mason and Dixon smoking dope with George Washington and his black-Jewish-slave-standup-comic Gershom; or about Ben Franklin, or Samuel Johnson, or the cameo performance by an unnamed Thomas Jefferson; or the performing electric eel Felipe; or Fang the talking dog or the robot Duck who wants to learn about sex; or the squint-eyed, large-forearmed, pipe-smoking sailor who translates God's *eyeh asher eyeh* into "I am that which I am." You'll have to find them yourselves. Pynchon is as metaphysically serious as Rahner, and also—I think—as funny as George Carlin. If a new character is introduced on every other page of this book, a new joke—and a good one—is told on every page. His laughter, like Lord Byron's, is the laughter of a kind of cosmic sanity, humanizing us even as we guffaw.

This is the book of a lifetime, and God bless him for it. □

Frank McConnell, Commonweal's *media critic, teaches English literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

A CAREER IN GOD-TALK

Just as I Am
The Autobiography of Billy Graham
Billy Graham
HarperCollins, $28.50, 760 pp.

Kenneth L. Woodward

The life of Billy Graham has been told and retold many times—by biographers official and unofficial, by countless journalists and, now, by Graham himself. Ten years in the making, this autobiography is obviously the work of many editorial hands. It is Billy as he would like to be remembered: the latter-day Apostle Paul, the American evangelist who has preached in person to more people (he estimates 200 million around the world) than any other Christian in history. But it is, unfortunately, not Billy just as he was. Too much has been left out, too little explained.

Graham's most revealing recollections concern his youth and education. His studied avoidance of denominational traditions and theological differences as an evangelist was incubated at home: His mother was a pious Scottish Presbyterian, his father an indifferent Methodist. Billy himself was baptized three times—the last a full immersion at the age of nineteen, which he underwent so that he might take a part-time preaching assignment at a Southern Baptist church. He gives no other reason for identifying as a Southern Baptist. What mattered was that he had been "born again" during a revival at the age of sixteen. That was enough, he tells us, to assure his place in heaven, and it was all he has ever asked of those he sought to convert. His is generic Christianity's most popular brand name.

The best pages in this long account of self are those of youth remembered. Shortly after a failed adolescent romance, Graham felt the call to be a preacher. But in retrospect he had been heading for the pulpit all along. At the interdenominational Bible Institute in Florida where he was a student, preaching was what everyone was supposed to do, and evangelism was all they talked about. For the young evangelist, preaching became a kind of priestly performance, an often exhausting pulpit ritual in which the Savior became verbally available through the preacher's rousing, Spirit-inspired words. When Billy edits tapes of his crusades, he once told me, he does not see himself but someone through whom God is speaking, someone who makes God present. It is an oral-aural sacrament: the flesh made word.

Perhaps because of this overwhelming reliance on oral performance, the later Billy Graham naïvely took too many politicians at *their* own word. The bulk of Graham's autobiography is divided into two kinds of chapters: those recounting his more than 500 evangelistic crusades, beginning in 1947, and those telling of his relationships with nine presidents of the United States, beginning with Dwight D. Eisenhower. What he doesn't tell us is how his evangelistic career brought him early into the confidence of men of power. Less then 200 pages into his life story, for example, Graham reveals that Sid Richardson, a crusty and immensely rich Texas oilman, dispatched him to Europe in order to persuade Dwight Eisenhower to run for president. Graham was only thirty-four at the time, and although he was already a budding celebrity—thanks to the power of the Hearst newspapers and the Luce magazines—he was no George Stephanopoulos. How had a farmboy from North Carolina developed such wealthy patrons as Richardson? And why would a general of the U.S. Army listen to a headstrong fundamentalist (as he was then) preacher? There are answers to be found in first-rate biographies by William Martin and Marshall Frady. But the odd thing is that Graham never seems to have asked himself these questions.

The truth is that in the fifties Graham was a fiercely outspoken anti-Communist—a stance which he now finds diffi-

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cult to recall. He was also an evangelist with an enormous personal following, which he here remembers very well indeed. For both reasons, Graham was a man worthy of cultivation by wealthy conservative businessmen, whose financial contributions he rarely acknowledges, and by politicians, who used him every bit as much as Billy used them. Billy's presidential stories contain a few surprises. Lyndon Johnson, he says, told him privately a year before the fact that he would not seek a second term. Johnson also promised to back him if Billy decided to run for president himself. Nixon was his closest White House friend, and even now, Graham writes, he cannot believe that the profanity recorded on the Nixon tapes "was part of [Nixon's] essential character." It never occurs to Graham that the politicians he claimed as friends never really opened themselves up to him, as sinners are supposed to do.

Throughout the book, Graham is less than candid about his own deep involvement with national politics. What readers would never guess, unless they had read the Martin and Frady biographies, is just how often Graham peppered the White House with memos and phone calls, offering advice on all sorts of subjects unconnected to the state of the occupants' souls. Astonishingly, Graham is silent on the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition; indeed, notables like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Jim Bakker are not mentioned at all. Graham always tried to distinguish his cause from those he felt were tarnishing the preacher's calling, and here he pretends that these others simply do not exist. They are not part of his story, though they are certainly part of his life and times. On the other hand, the index reads like a celebrity who's who of the last half century: It includes everyone from Frank Sinatra to Winston Churchill (who in one incredible scene bares his soul to Billy) to Henry Kissinger, who, Graham tells us (with equal incredibility), showed up more than once in 1957 during Billy's marathon sixteen-week crusade in New York City. In both cases, it is hard not to feel that Graham has been joshed.

It may be that Billy, now seventy-eight and ailing, waited too long to tell his story. But it may also be that he did not learn much from his experiences. After all, when you are the world's foremost "ambassador of Christ's Kingdom," as he calls himself, when your calling is to change others, what need is there to change yourself? Numbers don't lie, he might say. In fact, he does say: After almost every crusade he describes, Graham allows himself to note that he set a record for attendance.

And yet, having covered Graham for more than thirty years, I think he did change a bit. Not early on when, for example, he traveled to India to preach and (as he recalls here) was told by his advance man that Indians "have no conception of God." In fact, they have a very rich conception of many gods, but Billy never learned to appreciate other religions, even if it might have made him a more effective evangelist. But I think he was genuinely transformed in the eighties by his discovery of just how profoundly religious persecuted Christians were in Eastern Europe. I know he greatly admires John Paul II: Graham was among the first to recognize, early in this pope's reign, that John Paul is essentially an evangelist himself. Still, I have the feeling that he has never quite understood Catholics or Catholicism, though he once told me (a sentiment not mentioned here) that "I feel most at home in the Evangelical wing of the Anglican church."

In retrospect, Graham was never one to tell all he knows. And he is just too much of the Southern gentleman, certainly too palsy with too many people of power, too much the living icon, to level an honest assessment that might hurt another person. In any case, most of what he really knows and did know lies in the archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Illinois. Historians will retell his story. Billy'd rather the reader heed his closing words. Not surprisingly, they are an invitation to give one's life to Christ. □

Kenneth L. Woodward, *senior writer and religion reporter for* Newsweek, *is working on a book about miracle stories in world religions.*

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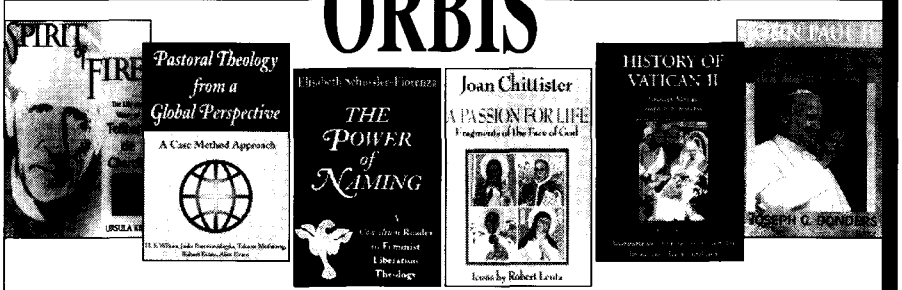

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TIES THAT ALMOST BIND

The One and the Many
America's Struggle for the Common Good
Martin E. Marty
Harvard University Press, $24.95, 238 pp.

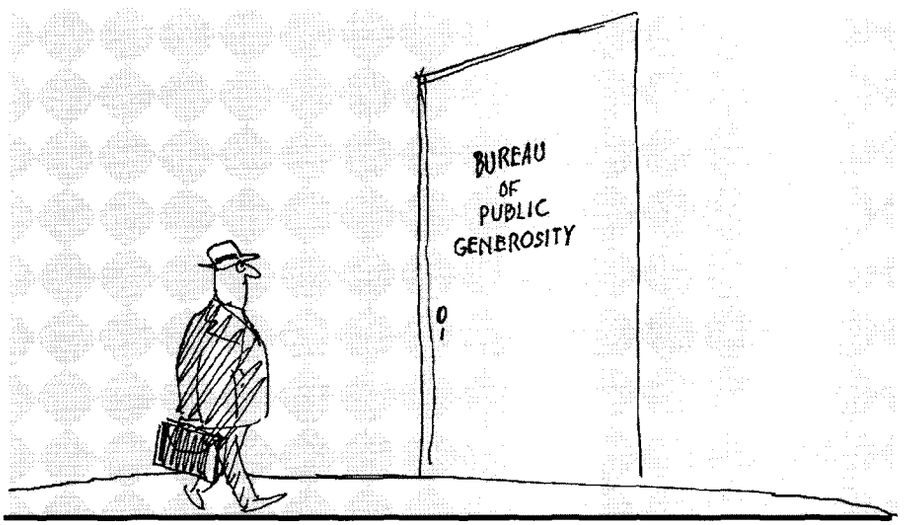
The New Golden Rule
Community and Morality in Democratic Society
Amitai Etzioni
Basic Books, $26, 314 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

America's public life is full of grunts and screeches and pervaded by a righteously accented rhetoric of me and mine, and Americans in droves, complicit but disgusted, are turning away from it. Martin Marty and Amitai Etzioni—respectively, a towering student of American religion and a distinguished sociologist, and founder of the communitarian movement—would like to draw them back, offering, in their different ways, what amounts to a prolegomenon to politics, the rediscovery of speech about the common good.

They agree that the United States is too large and too diverse for close and coherent community: Both are seeking a middle ground between what Marty calls "totalism," the effort to impose a single "story" or national culture, and a "tribalism" that would fragment us into warring islands of race, ethnicity, and gender; and both appeal to the possibility of "symbiosis" in a "community of communities" informed by a version of the doctrine of subsidiarity. But not surprisingly, they strike those balances differently. Etzioni is more worried about excessive individualism and disorder and more willing—as part of a conscious dialectic—to overemphasize the common; Marty is more skeptical about "grand stories" and more concerned to accommodate plural perspectives and voices. But they agree that, given our variegated cultures, habits, and histories, the bases of American unity lie in and around political institutions, a civic bond that, beyond the Constitution and the laws, requires its own sort of "cohesive sentiment."

In fact, Marty and Etzioni are participants in a very old American debate. The framers of the Constitution were content with relatively "diffuse" feelings of national unity, confiding that the United States could accommodate extreme diversity—including the culture of slavery—within the design of the laws. They did assume that American citizens would be white and dominantly Protestant, with largely common ideas about family and private morals, but they made no effort to preserve these likenesses. It was their opponents, the Antifederalists, who stressed that republican government depends on civic spirit and that, since self-government is at bottom the government of the self, it calls for, in place of coercion, a heroic effort to "arm persuasion on every side."



Ambivalent Marty leans toward the Federalist, while Etzioni comes close to the Antifederalist side, but both hope to revitalize or develop America's "moral voice," trusting that moral discourse ("telling our stories") will discover or create the ground of community. To be sure, both are more than a little vague about *how* this national "megalogue" is to take place, although Etzioni has a dangerously soft spot for electronic communication. Still, they are right to observe that the fact of conversation makes nonsense of the claim that we are locked into "incommensurable universes of discourse." And in any case, Marty and Etzioni are most concerned to establish that moral concerns and ideas of the common good are proper matters for public discussion, not simply "perspectives" or "value judgments" excluded—as a school of liberal philosophy has it—from legitimate political debate.

Marty does sometimes flirt with that view, following a generous, inclusive impulse and contending that the Constitution is neutral with respect to culture and not meant to "promote a creed or consensus or anything else substantive." Subsequently, while arguing—correctly—that the Constitution presumes the subordination of religion in secular affairs, Marty allows religion more space than the founders envisioned. Jefferson, who followed Locke in teaching that government can regulate religion's "overt acts," almost certainly would not have felt, as Marty does, that the First Amendment protects animal sacrifice in Santería. And fundamentally, Marty's thesis is simply wrong. The Constitution does have a creed: It aims to promote a "more perfect union," chiefly by opening the door to commerce and technology in the

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interest of human mastery and individual freedom, while weakening communities through temptations of the market and the allure of ambition.

Etzioni often slights political institutions, but he recognizes that the demoralizing—and homogenizing—effects of the market are reinforced by the Constitution's individualism, something he attributes to an overemphatic eighteenth-century attempt to promote autonomy against narrow and confining communities. As guides to practice, his ideas for correcting that excess often misfire, partly because he overrates the possibilities for transformation. (His suggestions for the reform of legal practice add up to utopianism squared; for example, he proposes that lawyers be prohibited from entering "not guilty" pleas for clients they know to be guilty, or from challenging testimony they know to be true.) In principle, however, it is hard to quarrel with Etzioni's hope for a democratic moral voice strong enough to be heard amid the clamors of the marketplace.

Unfortunately, along with more potent obstacles, any grand democratic dialogue is opposed by the intellectually fashionable support for a politics without "foundations." As both Marty and Etzioni indicate, moral discussion imposes fairly definite constraints and forms, most notably, rules of civility and respect. Political conversations aren't simply pleasant story swapping; they can easily turn violent because they are about things that matter. Our "stories," in fact, are serious efforts—sometimes desperate ones—to account for our common history and for the place of that history in human reality. The logic of moral discussion points squarely to first things.

Etzioni is ready to address those issues: He is comfortable talking about what amounts to natural right, and he affirms that, beyond its procedures, democracy is a norm and a goal. But even Marty's argument leans more in that direction than he wants to advertise. Marty's religious liberalism makes him quarrel with the view—associated with Chesterton, and more recently, with Sidney Mead—that America is a "nation with the soul of a church"; in Marty's analysis, the Declaration of Independence, too much like a creed, yields precedence to the Constitution. Yet the Declaration's doctrine is "civil religion" of a very special sort. Lincoln, of course, found it indispensable in making the moral case against slavery, and, in a quieter way, the Declaration's teaching is just as important to Marty's position. Marty's preference for inclusion rather than hegemony, for respecting and listening to America's many voices, like his confidence in their potential for harmony, goes well beyond utilitarian calculations. It rests, like the republic, on the proposition that all human beings are created equal. □

Wilson Carey McWilliams *is professor of political science at Rutgers University.*

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BOY, RABBI, GOLEM

Snow in August
Pete Hamill
Little, Brown and Company, $23.95, 325 pp.

Sean Callery

For now, Michael stood quietly in the hot Brooklyn night while clouds tried to become angels and birds talked and stones became roses and white horses galloped over rooftops, and the rabbi, at last, danced with his wife.

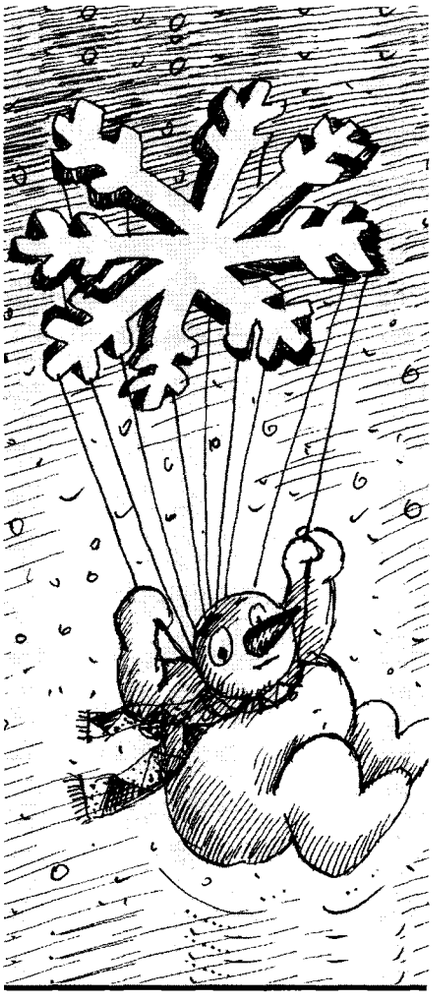
So ends *Snow in August*, Pete Hamill's new novel.

For decades, literary critics have referred to Graham Greene's milieu as "Greeneland." Pete Hamill's body of work, both as a journalist and as a novelist, deserves a similar designation. "Hamilland" is the working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn where the author spent his childhood and young adulthood. "Greeneland" is a metaphysical concept easily transportable to anywhere on the map, but "Hamilland" is a fixed location and the author all but identifies armories, churches, hospitals, and other public institutions. He does not go to the trouble to disguise sites convincingly. For instance, Brooklyn's Methodist Hospital is referred to as Wesleyan in the text. The neighborhood is familiar to this reviewer. I grew up just slightly north and a bit east of "Hamilland."

To write disparagingly of *Snow in August* would be akin to telling a child there is no Santa Claus. A strength of this tale is the author's unabashed romanticism. How to judge where romance and fantasy end and reality begins is not always apparent. But this might be of little account in the end. The book is a good read, and such a technicality will not matter to many readers.

The goings on in "Hamilland" are familiar to readers of Hamill, Jimmy Breslin, and a few others. In this novel, its inhabitants include, chiefly, a hard-working widow raising her preadolescent son, Michael Devlin. Natives are sharply divided between good guys and bad guys. The bad guys are the Falcons, a rowdy and lethal gang. An assortment of decent folk includes a socially responsible priest. Hamill's attitude toward the clergy in this work is far more friendly than it has been in the past. Is this a symptom of advancing age and the terror we sometimes feel when many things remind us of our own mortality?

The Falcons beat an innocent Jewish merchant almost to death. Shortly after this, as Michael is passing a synagogue, he encounters a rabbi. Rabbi Hirsch asks Michael to flick on a switch that will illuminate his home. "A Shabbos goy I need in here," says Rabbi Hirsch. This is the beginning of enlightenment for both the rabbi and Michael. Michael learns something of Jewish history, religion, and mythology, and the rabbi begins to understand both good English and slang.



Soon the violent world intrudes. The Falcons smear swastikas on the wall of the synagogue. Michael is first to see the outrage and tells Father Heaney, for whom he is about to serve as an altar boy. Some good guys are importuned by the priest to accompany him and Michael to the synagogue and wash and scrape away the vicious graffiti.

The Falcons, who are suspected by the police of being the perpetrators, erroneously conclude that Michael has singled them out as the culprits. In the code of honor among such people, cooperating with the police is a mortal sin that must be punished. Now Michael is a target in his own neighborhood, as is his mother, who endures a near-rape from some of the Falcons.

Soon Rabbi Hirsch is beaten savagely, and so is Michael. The rabbi has told Michael of the powers of a *golem*, the creature from Jewish lore who is forceful and intelligent enough to attack successfully persons who threaten a Jew who invokes the mysterious power.

As the severely injured rabbi lies in the hospital, Michael enters his room and beseeches him to reveal the secret name for God. This, along with complicated chanting and detailed ritual, will create a *golem*.

Michael enters the dark synagogue by himself and quickly finds the hidden materials necessary for bringing the *golem* to life. The supernatural creature blows three long alarming notes on the *shofar* and...well, you can guess what happens. The *golem* then accompanies Michael to the pool hall, which is the Falcon's headquarters. The *golem* and Michael terrify and humiliate the gang. The bad guys are utterly defeated.

Hamill's mixture of reality and fantasy will not yield easily to conventional appraisal. In fact, *Snow in August* is almost immune from criticism. □

Sean Callery *is a writer. He lives in Brooklyn.*

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YENTA POWER

Resistance of the Heart
Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany
Nathan Stoltzfus
W.W. Norton, $30, 386 pp.

Madeline Marget

During a few days at the end of February and the beginning of March 1943, hundreds of gentile German women gathered in front of the Berlin building where their Jewish husbands were being held. Incredibly, their street protest saved the Jewish men from deportation to the East—to concentration camps and almost certain death.

The women were neither armed nor organized; their power came from the convictions of their hearts and the experience of their daily lives. In a society dedicated to racial separatism and hate, they were devoted partners in what the Nazis considered interracial marriages. Their character and personal histories impelled them to demonstrate for their husbands' release and against the Reich, but their strength and need were not the only reasons they succeeded. One curious, but important reason for the success of the protest was that the Nazis sentimentalized the role of women and the importance of the family. In this respect, the fascist regime depended on the appearance of popular support, and therefore was vulnerable to a collective and obviously passionate protest by German women.

Scarcely taking a step into a concentration camp, Nathan Stoltzfus still manages to chronicle the insidious evil that was Hitler's Germany. Stoltzfus brings great emotional and moral force to bear on the stories he tells as well as to his scrupulous delineation of twenty years of German political history. Without any romanticizing, he shows what the powerful bonds of committed marriage can do even in an unimaginably cruel world. With his clear and caring eye and hard work—*Resistance of the Heart*, a scholarly book, was at least ten years in the making—Stoltzfus draws lessons about the dynamics of politics and human behavior from this little-known episode of popular protest against the Nazis.

Popularity was essential to Hitler's success. "One cannot rule by force alone," he said. "Force is decisive, but it is equally important to have this psychological something which the animal trainer needs to be master of his beast." "The Nazi regime," Stoltzfus writes, "...translated its race ideology into genocide *in interaction with the German people*...the regime's ideology might never have developed into genocide had the German people not attained for the regime a *social isolation of the Jews, the prerequisite for deportation and mass murder*" (my italics). Knowing the degree to which the Nazis succeeded makes reading Stoltzfus's book an experience of increasingly informed apprehension, especially because of the view he gives of the ease with which hate was incited and encouraged. Germans spat on their Jewish neighbors, poured urine on them, and voluntarily informed against them. Step by incremental step, Stoltzfus presents both the growth and consolidation of a murderous and evil society as he outlines the parallel development of a few souls whose humanity grew stronger in opposition to the regime.

The Reich tried to control the configuration of families. In 1935 the Nuremberg laws forbade marriage between Jews and non-Jewish Germans. But by that time most of the women of the Rosenstrasse resistance were already part of Jewish families, and becoming attached to Jewish friends. Some of the women had even married when they did *because* they knew they would soon be forbidden to do so, though they could not know the horror that was coming.

Most Germans marched with the Reich and, as Stoltzfus says, "found no place to draw the line." But a few others formed loyalties and habits that led to resistance. Charlotte Israel's protectiveness and tender heart contributed to her choice of artistic, crippled Julius as her husband, and the cold bigotry of her family threw into relief the value of his warm and welcoming circle. Wally Grodka, visiting her parents so that she might bring home firewood she and her family badly needed, rejected the advice of her Nazi relatives to divorce her husband—an action that would condemn him to death—and left refusing the gift of fuel for which she had come. These women went from marrying against the majority's wishes to becoming their family's only breadwinner, sharing the hunger and cold thrust upon their Jewish husbands, and then experiencing the grief, terror, and loss of their closest connections. Not all behaved nobly; and the noble ones did not behave nobly all the time. Nevertheless, in the face of terrible danger to themselves, they took life-saving actions because, by then, such conduct seemed to them natural and inevitable. They did, as Charlotte Israel said, that which it was given to them to do. Ultimately that included the street demonstrations in which, though they were terrified, they were careless of risk.

The women of the Rosenstrasse resistance were not saints. They were good people, and they succeeded with the means and power that ordinary people can gain in extraordinary circumstances, if their hearts and minds are ready. This is not to say that everyone who tried to save lives during the time of the Holocaust could succeed. Many people of great courage and exemplary ethics, employing all the strength they could muster, died trying. □

Madeline Marget *is the author of* Life's Blood *(Simon and Schuster).*

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Money
Who Has How Much and Why
Andrew Hacker
Scribners, $25, 246 pp.

Alan Wolfe

Readers will find lots of fascinating tidbits in Andrew Hacker's *Money*. There are more attorneys in America than there are adults in Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Saint Louis combined. The attorney general of the United States makes roughly the same salary as a well-paid professor at Wellesley College (and $30,000 less than another professor in the same discipline at Brandeis). Americans of Dutch origin have lower incomes than those of Thai ancestry—and this before Tiger Woods earned a penny. Indian engineers man the New York City subway system. We even learn what Hacker himself makes, although only his salary; Hacker keeps his income from his writing secret (as I will my fee for this review).

One of the questions that puzzle Hacker is not why some make so much, but how others can survive on so little. Salaries were relatively low twenty or thirty years ago, but people still got by—often on one income. They did so, Hacker reminds us, because how we spend is as important as what we make; if we happily drank Maxwell House, we never needed to spend what we now do on Starbucks. Of course, there are still some of us who get by on very little: Airline reservationists in New Mexico make about $14,000 a year. How do they manage? They postpone marriage and children, double up on jobs, and take satisfaction in the fact that they are not on welfare.

Hacker rightly refuses to get engaged in efforts to define with precision how many social classes there are in America and where the lines between them can be drawn. He prefers more capacious and flexible categories. By his rough estimates, 28.4 percent of Americans are economically deprived, 53 percent are coping, and 18.6 percent are comfortable. The bulk of his book deals with the last of these categories: chief executive officers (CEOs), doctors, lawyers, even professors.

Not everything Hacker offers here is news. We do not need his book to be reminded of the absurd salaries offered to CEOs by grateful directors at Disney and AT&T. Nor is it a surprise to learn that the poorest Americans have not done as well over the long twenty-year stock-market boom as the wealthiest Americans. Hacker is better when he goes against the grain. Why, he asks, given the $672 million in stock awards that the CEO at Coca Cola made after fifteen years of service in 1995, did the fifteen-year veteran at Ashland Oil make only $3 million in stock awards? And if it a surprise to learn that not all CEOs reap unimaginable profits, it is a shock to discover that the gap between the household income of the richest and poorest states was actually cut in half between 1960 and 1995, which suggests that, as a nation, we are more unified, and less regionalized, than ever before.

All of which reinforces the point that, when money is king, stability is illusory. Humongous family fortunes, Hacker reminds us, can be passed down to the next generation and the one after that, but not much beyond two. Americans would have a hard time even recognizing the names of some of their richest compatriots, such as Arthur Blank (Home Depot) or Frederick Smith (Federal Express). Doctors have seen their salaries shrink as health-maintenance organizations have grown. Professors will someday lose tenure. There are more women bartenders than men, and, if present trends continue, there will soon be more women pharmacists than men. A sociological portrait of money will never be a still photograph.

Emulating that great student of emulation, Thorsten Veblen, Hacker has written a book which is informative and entertaining. But it is also on occasion annoying. Not content just to describe America, which he does exceedingly well, Hacker also comments on it, and here his judgments are not always acute.

"Does America's way of allocating money make any sense at all?" Hacker asks. Clearly he doesn't think so. CEOs claim that their salaries are justified by the fact that other companies offer them even more to move, "and yet," Hacker writes, "one might ask why the Ford Foundation felt compelled to bestow $839,139 on its presiding officer. It is unlikely that he is besieged with offers from Exxon or Dupont...." I consider myself no great admirer of the Ford Foundation (whose presiding officer, by the way, is a woman), but the fact that she makes eight times more than the average full professor at Princeton does not strike me as especially heinous. Having spent some time watching how foundation—or university—presidents spend their time, I would gladly accept a significantly lower income to spend more time with my family.

Like Veblen, Hacker reaches for ironic notes, but without the Norwegian's phrase-making talents. A few of the great-grandchildren of nineteenth-century capitalists remain active in philanthropic or public life, but we should not imagine that the rest are useless or lazy: "Perfecting a golf swing and deciding what to wear at a benefit require more time and dedication than the rest of us might think." Law firms insist that they are doing their best to promote black partners. "Perhaps," Hacker comments, "they are looking for a fledgling Colin Powell with a legal degree."

Hacker satisfies a great deal of our curiosity about money. But his editorializing, especially when his irony is so heavy-handed, backfires. One thing about money: It's a subject in which we

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all take an interest. Hacker's skill at presenting numbers and his generally playful tone provide all the indignation his book needs. For those reasons alone, *Money* is worth the money. □

Alan Wolfe *teaches sociology and political science at Boston University. His most recent book is* Marginalized in the Middle *(University of Chicago Press).*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

nial of the enduring covenant is where anti-Semitism begins.

While it may be that today the official position of the Catholic church does not condone anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic teaching still goes on. I recall co-leading a workshop on the issue at a post-Vatican II Catholic Charities meeting, when a member of a religious order of women privately expressed amazement, and relief, at my statement during the workshop that the covenant endures. My continuing experience is that this ignorance (and the prejudice that flows from it) is still very widespread among otherwise quite literate Catholic people. In his poignant piece in *Commonweal* [April 25], Aaron Godfrey shows how deep and pervasive it can be.

MATHEW AHMANN
Washington, D.C.

The author replies:

Frankly, I was a bit shocked myself to read in Mr. Ahmann's letter that there are no distinctions to be drawn between the sin of discrimination and the sin of murder, let alone mass murder. In defending his untenable thesis, Mr. Ahmann winds up convicting the Christian anti-Semite of the same crime as the concentration camp guard and the architects of the Shoah. Is this not itself a "perversion of justice"? The difference between bigotry and murder may not matter to Mr. Ahmann, but I can assure him that it matters a great deal to the victims. I trust it matters to God as well.

Mr. Ahmann will get no argument from me about the sinfulness of Catholic anti-Semitism. My attempt to distinguish degrees of culpability concerning the Holocaust was not about avoiding responsibility, but properly affixing it.

PAUL BAUMANN

Silent complicity

I appreciated Todd Salzman's article on the church's failure in Rwanda ["Catholics & Colonialism," May 23]. I worked as a Grail lay missionary in Rwanda from 1959 to 1963, serving at the invitation of Archbishop André Perraudin, then the country's leading prelate. For two years I worked in a refugee camp set up for Tutsis who had fled their homes in the first wave of ethnic violence.

After describing the marriage of church and state throughout Rwanda's missionary history, Salzman implies that Perraudin's support of the Hutus at the time of independence was inspired by the church's social teaching. But why then, when Hutus committed brutal injustices against the Tutsis, beginning in 1959, did I hear nothing from the archbishop about social justice? Was the silence of the missionary church in those years one of the factors leading to the far more monstrous events of 1994? Ought we former missionaries to acknowledge our own complicity through silence?

MARIETTE WICKES
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Excellent book & review

Thank you for Lawrence S. Cunningham's review [June 6] of Sister Miriam Pollard's unique, excellent, and relevant book, *The Other Face of Love*. This book, difficult to review, he reviews succinctly and well. Can I imagine him doing it better? Yes, but only in a blur. Can we your readers imagine the fullness of God's mercy? Yes, but only in a blur. We can and must try. Thanks to Sister Miriam's book, many will do so with less of a blur, with a bright joy that hurts and is still joy. And, if we fail to do so, the mercy will still be there.

PHILIP C. FISCHER, S.J.
Saint Louis, Mo.

No prophet, he

Padraic O'Hare's letter [July 18] commenting on Paul Baumann's critique of James Carroll's *New Yorker* article [May 23] is astounding. Judged on purely journalistic grounds, Carroll's piece was such a transparent effort to vilify two popes that O'Hare's effort to elevate the exercise into a serious theological statement is rather like teaching a course on the hermeneutics of *Hustler* magazine.

Like Carroll, I too have lunched at L'Arbuzzi with Gerry O'Collins; like Carroll, I have lunched with Hans Küng in his home in Tübingen. What I found journalistically contrived was the hokey, *faux New Yorker* way Carroll had of connecting these two lunches—mentioning a Küng interview in an Italian newspaper as an excuse for mortising Küng, with his predictable tirades against infallibility and John Paul II, into his piece. Indeed, the whole article is stitched together with such artificial travelogue segues in the service of dishing up as fresh what is really an old and discredited smear of Pius XII, *à la* Rolf Hochhuth's infamous notes to *The Deputy*. (While he was at it, why didn't Carroll mention that the Chief Rabbi of Rome, after seeing what Pius XII did to save the Jews of Rome, converted to Catholicism?) If Carroll were really up on intellectual life in the church he has so loftily risen above, he would not have committed the gaffe of citing Küng's book, *Judaism*, which he seems not to know was negatively received by Jewish readers. In fact, it was roundly criticized for being, among other things, anti-Jewish.

I wonder: Did Carroll complain to the *New Yorker* for the outlandish promo piece that appeared on that issue's come-hither coverflap: "What Sacrifice Is John Paul II Making to Preserve the Doctrine of Infallibility? James Carroll Reports on the Church, the Holocaust and Fifty Years of Silence." As Baumann pointed out, papal infallibility has nothing to do with the Holocaust—much less with the list of other concerns, such as women's ordination, that Carroll

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Coming
September 12
Laity & Life of the Church

manages to squeeze into his meandering article.

A question I had after reading Carroll's piece is whether he proposed it or editor Tina Brown ordered up a piece attacking the church. Brown has a long track record, first at *Vanity Fair*, and now at the *New Yorker*, of printing unflattering pieces about Catholics and their church by people who manage to get everything wrong. When she was at *Vanity Fair*, Brown published a notorious profile of Cardinal John O'Connor, in which journalist Leslie Bennetts interviewed a whole range of Catholics, including Peter Steinfels and Eugene Kennedy. In a follow-up piece in *Newsweek*, I reported that all those interviewed by Bennetts had positive as well as negative things to say about O'Connor, and they were irate that none of the positives were included in her piece. The subtext of that article, like the one by Carroll, was the church's retrograde position on abortion and other matters dear to professional feminists. (In her editor's column, by the way, Brown puffed the piece by suggesting that O'Connor might be the next pope!)

In Carroll's case, we get something worse: a kind of puerile rejection of "hierarchy," of all things, from an ex-priest who tells us, in his interview in the May 23 issue, how "heavenly" it was to be young, ordained, and given a pulpit to preach against the war in Vietnam while daddy was a general in support of it, and how little the priesthood meant to him once the clerical soapbox that was his by virtue of ordination, not insight, was no longer needed. Now this ever-so-sensitive child of the '60s has given us a tedious book about himself and his father that manages only to harden the impression that the era he celebrates was not so heavenly after all, precisely because it preserved, as in emotional aspic, an adolescence that too many of his age-mates are loath to leave behind.

Finally, that O'Hare should invoke Abraham Heschel as a closet Tillichean does a grave injustice to a man who, like most great theologians and men of deep prayer, was able to address others outside his tradition precisely because he was so deeply formed in his own. *Contra* O'Hare, it is Carroll who is theologically challenged: I found his article morally naïve, historically one-eyed, and narratively contrived. If O'Hare thinks Carroll prophetic, he should read Heschel's *The Prophets*.

KENNETH L. WOODWARD
New York, N.Y.

The correspondent is a senior writer and religion reporter at Newsweek *magazine.*

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MALFUNCTIONING HEARTS

David K. Platt

One thing I wasn't expecting at a service station was a malfunctioning heart. My attention had been focused on my old car, which has a catalogue of troubles centered around a leaky cooling system. Now a red light had come on, signaling a defect in the electrical system. I pulled into a neighborhood service station to check under the hood, but found everything in place—the fan belt, the alternator wires, the tensioning bolt. As always, though, the water pump bearing was dripping water, so I grabbed my water bottle and walked into the station.

This station is in the new style; there are no air or water hoses by the pumps anymore, so I made for the lobby where the snack machines and restrooms are. Just before I got there, a young man came out. His eyes were big, and he mumbled something about a heart attack. I went ahead.

Right inside the open door to the lobby lay a young woman, spread-eagled on the floor. She had penny loafers on her feet, and they were twitching. Her face was purple, darkening toward grey. A strangled croak came out of her. She was dying. To my left someone was on the phone to 911. To my right the gas station attendant was making change at the till while two other young women bent over the dying girl, one pushing hard on her rib cage, the other blowing into her mouth.

I stepped carefully over the young woman's legs and filled my water bottle at the drinking fountain. I thought about what I should do, what the heroic thing would be. Surely a dying person called for something heroic, even in the lobby of a modern service station. I couldn't come up with anything. I stepped back over her legs. Her face was going dark grey now. I filled the coolant reservoir on my car, and returned to the lobby as an attendant came out. His eyes, too, were a little big, but he was functioning as normal. Now the young woman on the floor was awake, sitting up and looking around, murmuring to her friends. As I walked past her I looked down into her large brown eyes and said, "Hey, you're back." She smiled a little.

I refilled my bottle. A change in the sounds around the girl made me look over—she was down again, purple and convulsive as some invisible strangler clamped down. Her friends worked over her. An ambulance was just swinging in as I stepped out of the lobby. Two men got out. As one gathered his gear, I pointed to where the girl lay, and told him she had been conscious, but had just gone under again. "OK," he said. I waited a half second for something more, thinking maybe he could use more information. Apparently not. I walked to my car to top up the reservoir, then returned to the lobby. The young woman was conscious again, talking to the medics as they pulled her shirt collar aside and fastened electrodes to her chest. She said her name was Christine. A medic asked her if she had taken any drugs earlier in the day. She said no, that she had had these attacks before, that she was seeing a doctor to find out what was wrong with her heart.

What about mine? During the entire episode, I am sure it never skipped a beat. I seemed barely more ruffled than if I had tripped over an unexpected rock that might have dropped off the blue face of a glacier. Death was right there, right between my feet, and I still tended my small mission, my water bottle and leaking pump.

I have tried to reassure myself by noting that everything seemed under control, that there was not much I could have done. My knowledge of CPR is either general, or, as that of a zoologist, very particular and physiological; in any event, it is book knowledge, and almost surely less help to Christine than her friends' practiced skills. I can see that pushing in and attending to her myself might have made the situation worse. I can say that because 911 was already on the line, there was nothing for me to do. This argument seems sound on the surface; it is sensible and is the argument that I hear from my family. But it leaves me suspicious. It is difficult to believe my reactions are so fine-tuned. Can I be that well-wired, my responses so perfectly coordinated with observation that I would stay so cool after a quick assessment of the situation?

As I drove away from the station, I looked back as the ambulance men were loading Christine on the gurney. For a moment I thought I might visit the hospital the next day to see how she was doing, but the impulse melted away. Everything had worked so well. Her friends knew CPR, someone called 911, the medics arrived, and Christine's doctor will get her fixed up with some new, efficient, chemo-mechanical procedure. Her heart will work fine. I still worry about mine. □

David K. Platt *is a free-lance writer living in Corvallis, Oregon. He has formerly taught composition and technical writing at Oregon State University.*

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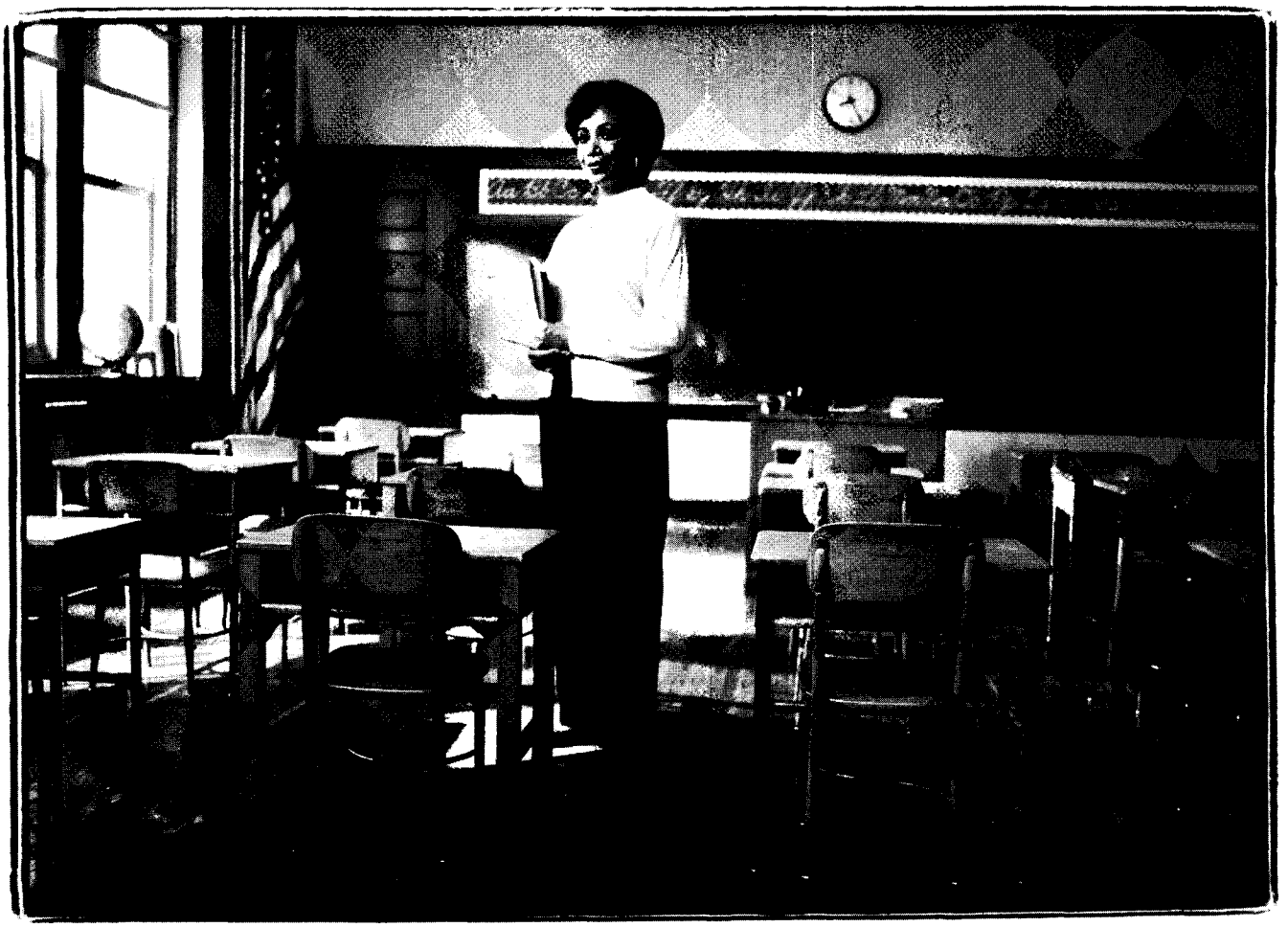

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